



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

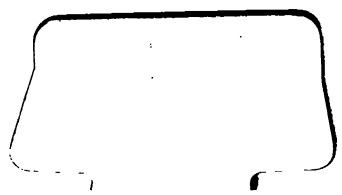
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3





EVANGELICAL UNION DOCTRINAL SERIES.
(*EIGHTH ISSUE.*)

•

THE
CHARACTER OF GOD.

EVANGELICAL UNION DOCTRINAL SERIES.

—o—

*The following Volumes of the Series are now ready,
Price 2s. 6d. each.*

REGENERATION: Its Conditions and Methods. By the
Rev. ROBERT CRAIG, M.A.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD. By the Rev. ROBERT
MITCHELL.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK: Its Nature and Extent.
By the Rev. GEORGE CRON.

THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT. By the Rev.
WILLIAM ADAMSON, D.D.

**THE DOCTRINES OF PREDESTINATION, REPROBATION,
AND ELECTION.** By the Rev. ROBERT
WALLACE.

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN. By the Rev. ALEXANDER BROWN.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL. By the Rev. WILLIAM
TAYLOR.

—

OTHERS IN PREPARATION.

THE
CHARACTER OF GOD.

BY
FERGUS FERGUSON, M.A., D.D.,
Pastor of Montrose Street E. U. Church, Glasgow.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS & CO.
GLASGOW: THOMAS D. MORISON.
1881.

141. n. 19.



P R E F A C E.

It does not violate any secrecy to say that the different subjects hitherto taken up in this series of books by ministers of the Evangelical Union, have been assigned to the various authors by the Publisher, and those who are deeply interested in his literary enterprise. We have thus, to some little extent, resembled the brethren who have been called upon to deliver lectures in connection with the various foundations which are now so common, as, for example, the Congregational Lectures, the Baird Lectures, and the Cunningham Lectures, and which have of late years contributed important works to the stock of our country's theological literature.

While making this explanation as to the reason why I have ventured to come before

the public with this little volume on the Character of God, I do not mean to say that I have not written *con amore*, or without having my heart in my subject. The subject, in fact, is a most comprehensive one, and one that draws deep into the very foundations of theology. In one view of the matter it may be said to include all the other topics on which my accomplished predecessors in authorship have already spoken. For if a man's views be right on the Character of God he will think correctly on the Divine Fatherhood, on Sin, on Atonement, on Regeneration, Predestination, the Freedom of the Will, the Holy Spirit's Work, and all affiliated points. This is the reason why my reader will find in the following pages that I have been led to touch on several subjects already noticed in this course—briefly to be sure, yet in a manner that was needed to complete the outline of my argument.

It will be in the recollection of many brethren in Scotland that the late much-esteemed Dr. Bathgate of Kilmarnock, published

a treatise on "The Moral Character of God,"—one of the very first effusions of his earnest and pensive pen. I have eulogistically noticed his treatise at page 84—where also I have taken the liberty of showing how I have diverged, to some extent, from his path of procedure; but I refer to the subject in this preface simply for the sake of saying that his valuable treatise has been so long out of print that I cannot be charged with even the appearance of trying to supersede his work by issuing this volume.

I have given as much time and labour to the composition of this little book as the numerous cares which are necessarily connected with a considerable congregation, and other literary labours, would permit. I need hardly add that I commend it to the blessing of Him whose character it is intended to exhibit and defend.

F. F.

GLASGOW, *October*, 1881.

“God is a Spirit.”—*Jesus*.

“God is Love.”—*John*.

“God is Light.”—*John*.

“We own and feel the force of amiable and worthy qualities in our fellow-creatures; and can we be insensible to the contemplation of perfect goodness? Do we reverence the shadows of greatness here below? Are we solicitous about honour, and esteem, and the opinion of the world? And shall we not feel the same with respect to Him, whose are wisdom and power in their original?”—*Bishop Butler's first sermon upon the Love of God*.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE, - - - - -	v
CHAPTER I.	
THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, - - - - -	13
CHAPTER II.	
FOUR ARGUMENTS FOR THE BEING OF GOD, - -	18
CHAPTER III.	
HOW THE CHARACTER OF GOD MAY BE KNOWN, -	26
CHAPTER IV.	
THE LOVE OF GOD DISPLAYED IN CREATION, -	32
CHAPTER V.	
THE LOVE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE, -	39
CHAPTER VI.	
THE LOVE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST, -	46

CHAPTER VII.		PAGE
APPARENT DIFFICULTIES—OBJECTIONS FROM NATURE,	- - - - -	50
CHAPTER VIII.		
OBJECTIONS AGAINST GOD'S LOVE FROM THE BIBLE,		59
CHAPTER IX.		
OBJECTIONS AGAINST GOD'S LOVE FROM RESTRICTIONS IN THE SCHEME OF GRACE,	- - -	70
CHAPTER X.		
GOD'S CHARACTER YET MORE FULLY CLEARED,	-	75
CHAPTER XI.		
THE JUSTICE OF GOD,	- - - - -	84
CHAPTER XII.		
THE BIBLE ON GOD'S JUSTICE,	- - - - -	94
CHAPTER XIII.		
THE MERCY OF GOD,	- - - - -	103
CHAPTER XIV.		
THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD,	- - - - -	114
CHAPTER XV.		
"CLEARING HE WILL NOT CLEAR,"	- - -	120

CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER XVI.	PAGE
THE HOLINESS OF GOD, - - - - -	129
CHAPTER XVII.	
THE WISDOM OF GOD, - - - - -	143
CHAPTER XVIII.	
THE TRUTH OF GOD, - - - - -	158
CHAPTER XIX.	
THE DILIGENCE OF GOD, - - - - -	176



THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

IN commencing a treatise on the Moral Character of God, it is almost unnecessary, in order to gain our object, to begin, as Natural Theologians generally do, with a condensed argument in proof of the Existence of the Deity. We are indeed, for ourselves, content, like the Holy Scriptures, to take that grand fact for granted. The Bible nowhere conducts such a demonstration. It begins with the sublime utterance, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" and in its New Testament, when about to announce the wondrous manifestation of God which was made to accomplish man's salvation, with equal sublimity it declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It has no patience with the atheist—scornfully calling the man *a fool* who has said in his heart, "There is

no God"—even although he may not have uttered as much with his lips, or written it with his pen. How withering, then, would we expect the rebuke of the Almighty to be which would be administered to him who would print a book and publish it to the world with the express intention of proving that God did not exist! How puny, but how daring, such an arm must look in the sight of high Heaven, thus impiously lifted up against the Omnipotent!

Again, when the Bible would account for Atheism, or rather for its equally foolish counter-part Polytheism, it does not hesitate to ascribe it to the wickedness, as well as the folly of man. "They became vain in their imaginations;" "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

But the very air seems to be so full, in this nineteenth century, of questioning and unbelief, as well as of objections against even this cardinal article of our grand and good old faith, that we require to take some notice of them at the commencement of this argument, that thus we may carry the convictions of our readers along with us. M. Renan, in an essay published in 1869, says, "We know

nothing of intelligence or personality apart from a nerve-centre." To the same effect G. J. Holyoake wrote in what he called, about eighteen years ago, "the Refutation of Paley in his own words," "We know of no person without an organisation;" and Matthew Arnold has sarcastically observed, "Many divines write about the Deity as if they were quite intimate with him, as if, in fact, he lived just round the corner in the next street."*

To the first two doubters we reply, "We do know of a person apart from a nerve-centre and an organisation." That person is man; for most assuredly the friend whom we admire and love is not a mere thing of nerve and fleshly build, but an intelligent spirit that uses the nervous system and the bodily members as its servants and instruments. And if the objection should be pushed that, at any rate, we know of no rational intelligence save that which works through a bodily organisation, our reply would be, Quite true, *human* spirits require bodies as instruments of energy; but surely he would be a bold man

* See "Cornhill Magazine" for July, 1871. Article on "Literature and Dogma," by Matthew Arnold, page 47.

who would aver that there could not be a spiritual existence without a fleshly tabernacle. We expect that when man is perfectly restored and placed in a higher state of being he shall be made like unto the angels; and said Jesus, whom we accept as the great revealer of the Father, "GOD IS A SPIRIT." When we remember, moreover, that the creations of man's brain and man's hands are so miserably small, as compared with the stupendous marvels of the universe, we are constrained to admit that if these fleshly tabernacles may be regarded in one sense as the instruments, in another they are the limitations, of intellectual power. The very marks of design are in the universe which are in the works of man—only in an immeasurably increased degree. We would need something like an Infinite Man to perform these, to us, infinite works. But as such an existence were impossible and inconceivable, we fall back on the Scriptural representation of an Infinite Spirit. Sir Thomas More said long ago, "There seems to be no more difference between the soul of man and an angel than between a sword in the scabbard and when it is out of the scabbard." Happy similitude! In man we have the spirit sheathed; in an angel, not. In Em-

manuel we have the Divine Spirit sheathed ; in the Infinite Father, not !

As to Arnold's sneer, we accept what he ridicules as the statement of a most blessed truth. Long ago, when Scribes and Pharisees scorned the Saviour, they exclaimed, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them;" and again, "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." But oh how true these taunts were—utterances which we can indorse as the nervous and powerful expression of the redeeming love of God to men. Now, when Arnold says, "They seem to know God as intimately as if he dwelt round the corner in the next street," he really, although unconsciously, declares a precious and a blessed truth. God is round the corner in the next street. There is a neighbour of mine in the next street who knows God intimately, and is known of Him. I see God's presence and power and character shining out of that man's looks and manner and actions ; and I hear God speaking in his words and in the very tones of his voice. God dwells in him and walks in him, and calls himself his Father—even He, the Lord God Almighty. And apart from that sanctified indwelling, God is round the corner in the next street, in the blessed

breeze that fans the weary cheek and in the sunlight that cheers the sick room of the invalid. He is in the next country too, and the next ocean, and the next continent, and the next planet, and the next constellation—for all things live, move, and have their being in Him.

CHAPTER II.

FOUR ARGUMENTS FOR THE BEING OF GOD.

LET me in few words express the three great arguments generally used by theologians for the being of God, for the benefit of those whose minds may have been hurt by recent publications, with the addition of a fourth which I think important. There is first the *a priori* argument which such thinkers as Cudworth and Howe prized so highly. Unit- ing the demonstrations of Samuel Clarke and William Honeyman Gillespie, we state it thus: I exist; but I did not always exist. Therefore some one must have existed before me who caused my existence, and the existence of my predecessors too. Thus we prove the existence of some one from all eternity. And since, moreover, I

am an intelligent existence, that eternal existence must have been intelligent who caused my existence. Besides, I have the idea of extension, as well as of duration. I have been in different parts of this world, and I cannot conceive of any bounds to space. This infinite extension must be the attribute of a Being; for we cannot conceive of an Infinite Nothing. But I have already got the idea of a Being of Eternal Existence, and when I add to it the idea of a Being of Infinite Extension, I arrive by pure Reason at the conception of the Infinite, Eternal and Intelligent God.

The second great argument for the existence of God has been called, since Paley's day, The Argument of Design. Every one can understand and appreciate it. Let me thus briefly illustrate its nature and force, selecting one out of multitudes of proofs of design which meet us on every hand. In a museum in the Glasgow West End Park there is exhibited an Orrery of the Solar System, constructed by an operative belonging to the village of Fenwick, in Ayrshire, of the name of Fulton. By balls of various sizes, and placed at various distances, the spectator is enabled to see at a glance the relative

proportions and distances of the Sun and all the planets which revolve around him, from Mercury to Georgium Sidus. Fulton carried his Orrery from place to place, and gained, it was acknowledged, a well-earned livelihood by exhibiting it—besides receiving a medal of merit from a scientific society; for the skill and patient ingenuity he had displayed were wonderful. And yet his little balls were motionless, till driven by one or other of the 175 wheels which all played their respective parts in his marvellous machine; whereas these great orbs, of which they were miniature representations, all move, or rather rush, with appalling swiftness around the central orb without clashing or confusion. How ingenious then the mind must have been of Him who created them, and how powerful the hand of Him who launched them forth in their respective orbits, and still maintains them in the same! And when we recollect that uncounted systems, like our solar system, are revealed at night in the starry heavens, who can withhold the exclamation—

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good ;
Almighty, thine this universal frame
Thus wondrous fair ; thyself, how wondrous then ! ”

A city lighted up with gas, argues a

designer. And can we see the silvery moon begin her nightly journey without admitting that she sings as she shines, "A wise mind, a kind heart and an omnipotent hand placed me and keeps me here"?

There are towns in Scotland in which they do not light the street lamps when the moon is shining in an unclouded sky. That is to say, they do not need their own light-giving apparatus when the heavenly one is in full operation. And shall we see a designing mind in the lesser and not in the larger and more splendid arrangement? Of a truth, it would be most illogical to do so.

"You may as well conceive a lute to sound its own strings without the hand of an artist; a city well governed without a governor; an army keep its station without a general, as imagine so exact an order without an orderer. Would any man, when he hears a clock strike by fit intervals the hours of the day, imagine this regularity in it without the direction of one that had understanding to manage it? He would not only regard the motion of the clock, but commend the diligence of the clock-keeper." (Channing on the Existence and Attributes of God, p. 28.)

The third argument which we adduce in

favour of the existence of God is the Moral Sense, as Butler called it, or Conscience of man. There is in each human being a faculty which "accuses or excuses"—which declares authoritatively concerning a certain line of conduct that it is sinful and ought to be avoided, and concerning another that it is right and virtuous, and therefore ought to be pursued. We admit that by false education this inward monitor may be perverted, so that in one country that may be regarded as right which is differently regarded in another; yet when the errors of evil training are corrected, man is able to see, and be convinced of, the error, and thereafter abide permanently in the truth. Conscience needs, we admit, to be educated and educated aright; but, without doubt, the original faculty lies in the heart of man, susceptible of this holy education. Philosophers may analyse the capacity and say that it is just the eye of Reason turning not to mathematical or physical, but to moral truths; yet in man, and in man alone, can Reason turn such an eye, not in the dog, or horse, or elephant. You cannot bring them to understand what *duty* is. For fear of the whip they may obey man; but they know nothing, and never can

know anything of *remorse for duty neglected*. Man, however, has this high endowment; and therefore do we maintain that not only does his intelligent existence prove an intelligent Creator, but his moral nature proves that this intelligent Creator is also a Moral Governor. It proves that God is, and also that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

I might indeed have proved God's existence from all the faculties of the soul, and especially from the vastness of man's desires which cannot be satisfied without the Infinite God. I might also have enlarged on the fact that the idea of a God has been stamped upon man's soul by its Creator; for there is not a nation under the wide heaven but worships some superior or supreme Being. And as the printer's stamp argues a printer, that universal idea points up to Him who inscribed it on man's soul. But in this brief and introductory chapter, I must needs make a selection of arguments. And as Emmanuel Kant declared that the starry heavens satisfied him as to the existence of an Omnipotent Creator, and Conscience in man's breast as to the same Deity's being also a Moral Governor, I have, out of respect for his

name, chosen these two great proofs out of multitudes that might have been adduced.

I beg leave to add a fourth argument to these in proof of the being of God, I mean that which is deducible from the marvellousness of the Holy Scriptures. I am aware that severe critics have objected to the competency of this argument, as if it took for granted a certain doctrine in the premiss and then declared it proved in the conclusion. But I maintain the competency of the reasoning within certain limits. Are we not as fully warranted to argue the existence of a Divine Being, because we have found in the world a book which only He could make, as to maintain that He exists because we have found a creature called man whom only He could have created? We rise from nature up to nature's God; and we rise from grace up to the God of grace. When we find, then, a volume in the world composed by about fifty different authors, far separated from one another in several instances, both in the epochs at which, and the countries in which, they wrote—manifestly without any collusion—and yet constructing a work which, when completed, is symmetrical and unique, containing revelations which man left to himself could never have conceived—

extending from the genesis, or birth of things, to the apocalypse, or revelation of things to come, and with the scarlet thread of the Lamb slain running through it all, first in type and prophecy, and afterwards in anti-type and fulfilment, we come to the conclusion that a Divine Architect must have been superintending all these unconscious builders—that a Divine Author must have been guiding all these unwitting hands,—or what is the same thing, we come to the conclusion that there must be a God.

What then is this foundation-truth which we have been at the pains to see carefully laid down at the commencement of our labours, and on which we propose to rear the superstructure of our subsequent chapters? It is this, That the universe is not without a Governor; and that everywhere, as far as the telescope has enabled the inquisitive eye of man to penetrate, and away out into the abysses of infinitude, beyond the limits of creation, there is more, unspeakably more, than mere emptiness,—in fact, an Infinite Mind, an Infinite Heart and Infinite Will—an adorable Trinity of Love and Wisdom and Power. Wherever there is mind there is personality; and therefore an Infinite Mind is an Infinite Person.

Far out into space where Arcturus shines, and Orion and the Pleiades, this Infinite Mind abides and reigns. Every rolling orb wheels by His power ; and if these unnumbered systems are occupied by beings capable of appreciating God's perfections (as they probably are), all these myriad millions are under His eye and are the subjects of His government. We too are all His offspring, and in Him live and move and have our being. Our planet revolves not only in its circumambient atmosphere, but in the circumambient Deity. What is He, then,—this Infinite Being ? How important that we should know ! What is His character ? What is the character of the Governor of that Universe of which our planet Earth is one of the not least valuable provinces ?

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE CHARACTER OF GOD MAY BE KNOWN.

WE owe the word character to the Greek language. It is derived from the Greek verb *χαράσσω* (I engrave), and thus means literally all that nature or habit, or both conjoined, may have stamped upon a man, and by which

he is distinguished from other people. This constitutes his *χαρακτήρ*, or character.

The relation between disposition and conduct is an intimate one, and is universally acknowledged. If we could find out what a man is in heart, we could predict what he would be in life,—always bearing in mind that he is responsible for the state of his heart, and that he has the power of modifying it from time to time by means of the faculty of Attention and the self-determining power of the Will. When we speak of a man's character, then, we do not speak merely or even principally of his outward actions, but of that state of the heart to which they can be traced.

Every man's character is of importance, because every man has influence; but the greater his influence the more important is his character to society. Thus the character of a parent is of more moment, other things being equal, than that of an unmarried man, or of one who is childless; because the former has the power of mightily stamping his moral qualities upon his children, not only by their hereditary tendencies, but also by his example and by domestic education. Yet more influential, in some respects, because wider, is the

influence of a teacher, a minister of the gospel, a magistrate, a senator, or popular author. The phrase, "like priest like people," has become proverbial, and doubtless expresses a most important truth.

Now we are warranted to transfer these definitions and illustrations from the sphere of the human to that of the Divine character ; because man has been made in the image and after the likeness of God. God's moral character is just his heart, or Prevailing Dispositions, as revealed in his Actions, or general course of conduct towards his creatures, and especially towards us, his creatures in this world. And oh ! how immensely important for us to know what the character of God is ! Life or death hangs upon it. When an autocrat of Russia dies, the people are all eagerness to find out from his earliest decrees the character of the new Czar in whom supreme and even arbitrary power is vested by the constitution of the country. But O ye principalities and powers, O ye myriads of suns and constellations with attendant orbs, and specially, O thou wanderer Earth, that hast gone astray like a lost sheep, listen till thou shalt hear what the character of that Supreme Omnipotent Sovereign God is, with

whom thou hast to do, and on whom all thy hopes do hang!

Further, God's character is assimilating. The reason why impurity abounded in Greece and Rome long ago was, that their deities were sensual and impure. The people could not be expected to rise above those whom they worshipped. For the same reason impurity abounds in India to-day. Now let our God be most true and most holy and most merciful, although every man should be a liar, sunk in vileness and characterised by selfish cruelty! Yet let us see here, on the very threshold of our subject, its vast importance; for if we have erroneous views as to the character of our God, these errors are likely to work mischief in our own hearts and lives, —the blots in these corresponding to the mistakes as to the Heart and Disposition and Administration of the great Monarch and Magistrate of the Universe. And we have sometimes thought that we could account, to some extent, for the sternness and harshness and injustice which we have detected in the conduct of certain theologians and professing Christians, both living and dead, by the errors in their respective theologies as to the character of God. If they deemed him to

be cruel and unjust, what wonder that they should be cruel and unjust, and double-willed too !

How do we find out the characters of our fellow-men ? Every reader will at once reply, From their actions, the words they speak, the letters they write, the expression of their countenances, and, to use a comprehensive phrase, from their entire walk and conversation. Now God's character, I assert, may, in like manner, be found out by us, his creatures, from his works of Creation and Providence, the Holy Scriptures, and especially from the revelation of himself which he has given in the Incarnation, Life, and Death of Jesus Christ, his Only-Begotten Son.

The Moral Character of God is just another name for the Moral Attributes of God, his Love, Holiness, Wisdom, Justice, etc., as distinguishable from his Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Eternity, etc. The former are called by Natural Theologians the Communicable, and the latter the Incommunicable Attributes of the Deity.

As the following treatise is one of a Doctrinal Series issued by ministers of the Evangelical Union, in illustration and defence of their distinguishing tenets, I shall feel myself

called upon in the succeeding chapters not only to show how God's works, words, and Son reveal his Love, Justice, and Wisdom, but how the representations of such a book as the Westminster Confession of Faith, in certain respects, sully these divine attributes or dim their lustre; whereas the doctrines of world-wide grace, which we abet, bring back the glory of which these attributes had been shorn. Not that we mean to assert that the compilers of that Directory were less earnest and God-fearing or truth-loving men than we claim to be; but simply that we believe that God, in his Providence, has given us a key of interpretation which they had not, or failed to use.

I shall begin with the Love of God (considering subsequently its modifications of Mercy and Long-suffering); because it is the main pillar that supports Jehovah's throne—the darling attribute that sheds its halo over all the rest; nay more, that under which, in the opinion of many competent Theologians, they may all be summed and comprehended.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVE OF GOD DISPLAYED IN CREATION.

I SUPPOSE myself to be an individual who has been thoroughly convinced by such purely rational and physical arguments as have been already advanced in proof of the existence of God, and that now I am anxious to know what his character is towards me, and especially whether or not he loves me and my fellows who are round about me; for I feel that, when compared with this great and infinite Being, I am frail and finite. If he be malevolent or ill-disposed towards me, in that case his power would be my terror; but if he be benevolent and well-disposed towards me, his power will be my delight and a source of protection against all conceivable calamities. Let me suppose, then, that I am a youth just emerging from a state of pupillage, and able to look around me with an eye of intelligent and inquisitive curiosity; that I have at my side some aged and sagacious Mentor who is both able and willing to answer all my questions and solve my difficulties,—that, whether on account of the

land in which I have been reared, or the religious belief of my parents, or perhaps their almost eccentric desire that my mind should be a kind of *tabula rasa*, as yet unoccupied with any theories or prepossessions about revealed religion,—that for this reason, I say, my mind is a comparative blank about Scriptural truth, and that I am to work my way by means of careful questioning, by God's blessing, from ignorance and doubt up to faith and the joyous assurance of hope. My great desire, then, is to find out whether or not this glorious Being, called God, loves and cares for me and the world in which I have been placed. My meditations and interrogations assume something like the following shapes and forms:

As life could not exist upon the face of this planet, unless it were maintained by God's invisible power, in its wondrous orbit round the sun, I begin my questionings at that initial stage. Personating this imaginary inquirer and questioning my Instructor, as Telemachus was represented by Fenelon as questioning Mentor, I ask him if it does not show wondrous love in the great God towards all the inhabitants of this earth, without distinction and without exception, that such a

grand centre of light and heat as the sun should continually shine upon them and maintain them in warmth, and the earth on which they live? He replies in the affirmative, and enters into an elaborate explanation of the love displayed not only in the light and heat which that orb dispenses, but the marvellous attractive power which it exerts towards this planet, and by which the latter is kept in its place, and thus life maintained upon its surface. He also calls my attention to the motion of the earth upon its own axis, by means of which a period of darkness prevails so favourable for rest and sleep—balmy sleep—"tired nature's sweet restorer." When a mother draws close the curtain in the room that her little babe may sleep, does not that act argue parental love? And when the great and good God draws the curtain of night around that his children may sleep, may we not see in the twilight and in midnight's gloom his love towards all his creatures who dwell upon the face of the earth without respect of persons?

Pleased with the explanation, and rejoicing much in the blessed conviction that the unseen Deity loves me and cares for me as well as for all mankind, I say to my instructor,

"O good and kind sage, continue thy prelections uninterruptedly, and prove to me yet more convincingly from the works of Nature that God is good."

Thus encouraged, my preceptor, with countenance glowing with enthusiasm, thus speaks — "If the relation of the earth to the sun and the sun to the earth proves to you satisfactorily the goodness of God, consider now the organs and adaptations of your own body. You have yourself referred to the light of the sun, but why is it that you can behold the glories of that orb's rising and setting as well as of his meridian blaze? Simply because the Creator has placed a small and delicate ball, yet wondrously shielded, in the front of the brain, called the eye. The skill and the care displayed in its structure have delighted all the pious physicians and Natural Theologians who have examined its formation with attention and candour. The man who made a *camera obscura* was counted a great discoverer; but it was found that he had only succeeded in throwing a reflection of an external object on the canvas in his darkened room on the very same principle as that on which the great Creator had already reflected every image of external things in the bottom of the human

eye! The man had only found out a little one among the many grand secrets of the wisdom and the goodness of the infinite Creator! In like manner he who first discovered a telescope by which the distant stars could be brought comparatively nigh, was hailed as a genius and a benefactor of his race; but he, too, had only found out another of Jehovah's secrets by the use of that Reason which Jehovah had given him. In fact, an imperfection adhered to all telescopes till one ingenious man, by studying the human eye closely, and observing that the image passed through humours of various refracting powers, was led to make lenses also of various refracting powers, and so perfect the telescope! Thus it was God's telescope in such an eye as yours and mine, that led a sagacious optician to make man's telescope." When I heard this demonstration I almost involuntarily exclaimed, "How good is God! how good is God! Surely he is called God just because he is good!"

My Mentor continued—"The benevolence of the Deity also appears from your other bodily organs. Consider, for example, the invention of such a delicate instrument as the ear in the side of the human head, open at

the surface, so as the better to catch the sound, and in the interior penetrating far into the head, and terminating in a system of small bones so complicated as to resemble closely the most delicately designed machinery. What a blank existence would be were there no hearing!—no sweet sounds, no music of the groves, no music of the social gathering, and especially no music of the human voice divine! But oh what rapture lies in the adaptation of the reason-guided tongue to the convoluted ear, so that there fall upon its sensitive tympanum, every hour, words of instruction, of amusement, and of love! Then consider the adaptation between the wondrous digestive organs of the body and the food which Nature provides for your use. You spoke of the sun that gives heat; think also of the change of the seasons. In spring, the mild temperature is favourable for seed-time; in summer, the increase of heat for bringing the advancing fruits to maturity; in autumn, mild temperature again, for their ingathering; and winter for earth's repose before she is called upon once more to receive the productive seed into her bosom. Then when food convenient is brought to us, see how it is received into digestive organs marvellously

fitted to secure its being converted into blood and flesh and bone and muscle. Thus do we all live, and live by the goodness of God. Nor is there any stintedness or partiality in the dispensation of these gifts. The sun shines for all; the rain descends for all; the wind fans every cheek; the ground of the poor man brings forth as readily as the ground of the rich man. Verily, God is good and good unto all."*

When my Mentor had ended his discourse, my heart burned with inexpressible delight, and tears of thankfulness ran over my cheeks.

* The author begs here to offer, not indeed a word of apology, but simply of explanation. When he commenced this chapter, he had no intention of gliding so fully into the parabolic or narratory style of composition, but simply of representing himself as One who had been brought suddenly to believe in the goodness of God by means of the marks of love which appears in Creation, the Bible, and the Incarnation. When at length he found himself fairly into the imaginary vein, and detailing, fancifully, the experience of another, he put no bridle on his pen for a chapter or two, remembering how frequently the Saviour of the world instructed his audiences by parables. He thought it possible, also, that the Spirit of God might condescend to use the narratory style thus adopted to bring some inquiring soul to the knowledge of the truth.

I exclaimed, "Truly God is good. I feel as if he were very near me. But oh that I could see him, my instructor, as I see you, or hear his voice as I hear yours, or get a letter from him addressed to me in so many definite words, like that which you brought me from my father before he died." My instructor fixed upon me a look of tender regard; for I noticed that tears filled his eyes also as he said to me, "I have told you enough for once; perhaps when we meet to-morrow I may be able to present to you a letter from your Heavenly Father!"

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE.

I ARRIVED punctually at the appointed place next day, and waited eagerly for my Mentor. When he came I noticed that he carried something which seemed to be of considerable weight and dimensions in a valise, under his arm; but what it was I could not conceive till he had commenced his address to me in the arbour in which we had agreed to meet.

“I have more than once informed you that your father (for thus he began) was peculiar in his ideas as to the education of you, his son; but although, when I first acted as your preceptor and guide, I used to express my dissent from some of his projects, I ceased doing so, both because I observed that he did not like my criticisms, and also because I gradually found that he was right in his ideas, and that I was wrong. Well, one of his peculiar notions was this, that young children were not the better of being made too early acquainted with the grand truths of religion. He thought that their parents should wait till they had reached years of discretion and were able to appreciate these magnificent verities. He wished me, at any rate, to make this experiment with you, namely, that, while I watched sedulously over your morals, and saw to your education in all the branches of polite literature, I was not to let you know the great truths of the divine religion till you had reached your present age. That was the reason why I was instructed to keep you travelling in countries in which you would not be very likely to hear the wondrous particulars which I am now about to announce to you. He expected to be the first to com-

municate these to you himself ; but I find by his last will and testament that the task—the solemn and yet pleasant task—devolves on me.

“ You said, last night, that you ardently desired a more particular and personal revelation of God’s will and love than nature could give. I have now to make known to you the momentous fact that God has written a letter to his children (I mean the human family) on the face of the earth.” Here the venerable man produced from the bag which he bore a copy of the Sacred Scriptures—the first I had ever seen. As I regarded my preceptor with deep respect, and felt inclined to give credence to all he said, I fell upon my knees out of reverence for the large volume which he laid upon the table before me. When some minutes had elapsed, during which not a word was spoken, I ventured to rise, and sat down as far away as possible from the book which I was inclined to look upon as itself almost divine. “ O my instructor, tell me,” I said, “ Did the book drop from the skies ? or how was it given to us by the great God ? ” “ Come near,” my preceptor said, “ and examine it. Be not afraid or overawed. God says to us within its boards again and again, Fear not. Take the book into your own hands and look

over it. It has been written by various God-inspired men, who have given us messages and words from our Father as truly and directly as if he had spoken to us individually with his own voice. Indeed, he speaks to you and me to-day as truly and directly as if we heard him addressing us from a cloud or from the empyrean itself." Whereupon I replied in the greatest excitement and eagerness of mind, "O, father—for I may so style you, looking on you in the act of soul-enlightenment as occupying the place of my departed sire—you know the contents of the volume. I do not. My overwhelming desire is to know whether or not the great and infinite God loves me. Read, O read me, some extracts from heaven's great letter of love, as you represent it, bearing on that point, that my soul may be yet further soothed and the teachings of Nature confirmed."

Whereupon my preceptor opened the sacred volume, and, turning from place to place, read as follows:—"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." When these precious words were read I fell upon my knees, and exclaimed, "'Good to all!' then

assuredly he is good to me; surely, O surely, God is love." "My son," said my Mentor, "do you know that you have unwittingly repeated from God's letter yourself the saying which I was about to quote to you, 'God is love?' The Greeks called God *Tò ἀγαθόν* and *Ανράγαθον*, that is, The Good, and Good of himself. The Romans also styled Jove *Optimus Maximus*, 'Best and Greatest,' putting the attribute of goodness before that of majesty. But the appellation which Jehovah gives himself is grander still, 'God is love.' The full utterance is 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.' Listen again: 'God left not himself without witness in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' I told you yesterday that the love of God was displayed towards us in Nature and Providence, in that he was the maker not only of the world and of these bodies of ours, but also the constant supplier of all our wants. Now here he comes out from behind the cloud and tells us as much himself, namely, that the fructifying shower and waving crops are literally his gifts to us, and the demonstrations of his love. Listen once more: you said you wished

to know, as if in a letter from God, whether he was good or not. He claims to be essential goodness, and that all other streams of its manifestation are fed from him the central source. 'There is none good but one, that is God!' No wonder, then, that he says further, 'The Father of Lights,' that is, of all the luminaries you see twinkling at night in the sky, 'from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.' 'O praise the Lord! for he is good and his mercy endureth for ever.'" When these words were uttered I fell upon my face and remained for some time in both a posture and spirit of rapt adoration. At length my instructor said, "I will read you only one other divine utterance on the present occasion. It seems almost too much for your bodily frame to hear for the first time these grand disclosures of God's own love to you. But I wish to cap the climax and rivet the nails of previous impressions by making to you a final declaration from God, which your peculiar history and circumstances will render impressive and powerful. I know the strength of your affection for your deceased father; nor do I wonder at it, considering all that he was, and all that he did for you. Now I have to inform you that the love of the infinite

God resembles in tenderness and intensity that love, for he says, "LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN, SO THE LORD PITIETH THEM THAT FEAR HIM." Whenever I heard these words my eyes again overflowed with tears, and a wondrous scene was enacted before my astonished gaze. I thought that I saw my deceased earthly father standing near me, looking upon me with unspeakable love, and up in the clouds of heaven at the same time, I thought I saw a glorious Being, in the form of man, but far transcending in beauty and majesty any one I had ever beheld before. His face smiled upon me as my father's did, and it was impressed upon my mind that the double representation was intended to impress the divine utterance yet more deeply on my mind, to which I had just listened, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

My joy was unspeakable when I learned that the tender love of my revered earthly parent was a type, and only a faint type, of the infinite love of my Heavenly Father. But what interested me yet more was this, that I felt as if there was a reality in the marvellous celestial phenomenon I had just witnessed, and, turning to my sage preceptor, I said, "Has God

only revealed himself in his works and in his word? Is there no other more special and direct manifestation of his Being and Character with which man has been favoured? I feel as if it would be highly probable that the Deity would so make himself known. Tell me, O tell me, if it has been done!" My Mentor smiled and said, "Eager though you be for further information, it will be better to put off this, the greatest lesson of all, to a subsequent occasion."


CHAPTER VI.

THE LOVE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST.

SLEEP almost forsook my eyes that night, so excited had I been by the marvellous information that God my Father in heaven loved me as much as my earthly father had done. But with my great joy there became suddenly commingled, as the night advanced, a degree of doubt and distress, arising from what I now believe to have been a temptation of that enemy who ever seeks to pick away the good seed of the kingdom when it has been

sown in the heart of man. I found myself thinking, I could not tell why, on instances of human suffering which seemed to contradict, to a considerable extent, the two lessons on the divine benevolence which my preceptor had given me. He told me what a blessing it was to see and hear; but he forgot to speak about those that are blind and deaf. He praised the boon of good health; but he kept out of view the multitudes who are diseased and dying. "And now that I think of it," said I to myself, "if the happiness that is in the world proves the benevolence of God, does not the misery that is in it argue his malevolence too?" Consequently, when on the next day I stood before my teacher to get the last great lesson which he had promised me on the revelation of God's love to man, my breast was the seat of conflicting emotions, namely, joyous hope on the one side and painful perturbation on the other. My preceptor saw the cloud on my face, and when, in answer to his question, I told him its cause, he smiled and said, "Well, if this temptation has come from an enemy, it has been by the permission of your Heavenly Father; for it helps me to open up to you all the more opportunely and powerfully the lesson which I was intending

to give you of God's most wondrous revelation of himself in the Divine Man who appeared in our world eighteen hundred years ago." Whenever my Mentor uttered these words, my unhappiness vanished in the eager delight with which I anticipated the information which I was about to receive. My preceptor thus continued:—"You have asked why are suffering and sorrow found in a world which is also full of the loving kindness of God? The reason is that sin has entered into the world, the motions of which you must have already felt in your own heart. I read you only two or three extracts from the book of God, which again lies open on the table before me; but I must now tell you, in a few sentences, the condensed story of man's sin and the great remedy God has provided in the incarnation of his Only-Begotten Son." Thereupon the sage teacher proceeded to declare to me for the first time the story of Eden's fall and God's determination that very day to bruise the serpent's head by the seed of the woman; how the long line of priests and prophets had heralded the approach of this wondrous Being who, in so far as his appearance on the earth was concerned, might be called an Emanation from the Deity; how



he had been born in Bethlehem, reared in Nazareth, and, after his public ministry began, had revealed God, exclaiming, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father!" When he came to explain how, the wages of sin being death, Jesus drank the bitter cup, tasting death for every man; how after he was buried he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended up on high to the Father, the first fruits of them that slept; and how he was there in the sphere of the heavenly mansions preparing a place for all who would follow him by faith and holy obedience, the tidings proved too much for my excited frame. I actually swooned away with joy and wonder, and when after awhile I revived, through my preceptor's care, I cried aloud, "O, dear teacher, do you really believe yourself this astounding intelligence?" When he assured me that he really did give credit to it as God's gospel of salvation, I cried aloud, "Then why do you not speak of it every day? Why do you not speak of it to every man you meet in town or country?" That afternoon, in my excitement, I accosted every servant in the house and every labourer on the estate, with the question, "Do you know that God so loved the world as to give his Only-

Begotten Son? I never knew of it till to-day. My heart is overflowing with happiness. God loves me, and I am a pilgrim to immortality, destined to dwell with God and my Saviour for evermore." This is the light in which, as Jane Taylor would say, the gospel *would strike a stranger* who had never heard it before—the gospel of God's love as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

APPARENT DIFFICULTIES—OBJECTIONS FROM NATURE.

I HAVE endeavoured to show, as some may think, in too imaginative a manner, that God is revealed to be a God of love by the works of Nature, by the declarations of his own word, and especially by the Incarnation and Atonement of his Son. Before I advance to take up the objections against this position which have been brought from all these fields of theological investigation, let me ask, Is not this threefold cord a strong one—a cord not easily broken?

If the matter in hand were the character of

an earthly sovereign, and what the feelings of his heart might be towards a distant colonial dependency, which, moreover, had been in rebellion against him, would not any one of these sources of evidence be deemed pertinent and adequate,—while all the three together would be incontrovertible proof? Thus suppose that the king should send very valuable presents to the colonists, would not these be thought sufficient to show that he maintained no ill-will against them, and desired to prove himself clement and gracious? But if any caviller should say, “It is easy for a sovereign with such stores of valuables to give away a few of them which will never be missed out of the abundance,”—should the king sit down and write a long letter to his subjects with his own hands, or dictate several letters, even as many as forty, to sundry amanuenses—a dictation that would cost him much reflection and earnest, consecutive efforts, would not such a course of conduct be considered by any candid and unbiassed judges, likely to shut for ever the mouths of those who might yet bring charges of insincerity against the king? But if such doubters still remained in his dominions, suppose that the sovereign should send out his only son

and the heir of his throne to that distant colony for the purpose of accomplishing its full pacification, well knowing that the young man ran imminent risk of perishing through the severity of the climate, as well as the enmity of the people,—and that after the son had died, his father, instead of marching a hostile armament against these rebellious subjects, should all the more beseech them to be reconciled to him because the prince had found a grave in their inhospitable clime, who, oh! who, after such accumulated proofs of goodwill, would have the hardihood to deny the genuineness of that monarch's love to that colony?

Our illustration hardly needs to be applied. Rebels though we be, our Heavenly Father, as we have seen, has showered unnumbered blessings on us “in rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,” and all, indeed, we required for the enjoyment of life on earth. Not content with that, he has declared his deep interest in us through the prophets whom he inspired “at sundry times and in divers manners.” But last of all, and loudest declaration of all, he said,—“They will reverence my Son;” and therefore he despatched the Only Begotten “full of grace and truth,” to reveal

the heart of the Godhead to man, as that which overflowed with merciful regards. Him he sent, although he knew that cruel men would crucify and kill him. And now, as if over the dead body of his son, without vindictiveness and without malevolence, he beseeches sinners to be reconciled to him. Who can deny, or reasonably doubt now, in the face of this threefold evidence, that the heart of the Eternal is towards Adam's fallen race "most wonderfully kind"?

But objections are nevertheless urged either by sceptics or narrow-minded theologians against the grand position which we have taken, namely, that God, the invisible God, loves all his creatures, and therefore the entire family of man. Now, these objections are drawn from all these three kingdoms or domains, which we have just brought under contribution in our preceding argument.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST GOD'S LOVE FROM NATURE.

In the parable which we employed, in last chapter, we represented the inquiring youth as having been visited with the temptation to doubt God's love from the sufferings which human beings endure. This difficulty, perhaps, deserves to be treated at yet greater length

in any theological treatise which would propose to elucidate the character of God. For whereas the trials and suffering which man experiences may be accounted for, to some extent, both by his sins, for which they are to be regarded as a punishment, and his restoration, with a view to which they are to be looked upon in the light of sanctifying discipline, what are we to say of the fear and pain which are endured by irrational creatures to whom sin is impossible, as well as of the millions of tender children who suffer and die in infancy?

Infidels are constantly bringing up an objection, for example, that is drawn from the fact that so many animals are created, the one class with a nature which leads them to prey upon others; while these others manifestly are so constituted that they are to them an attractive prey. Dr. Paley replies to this sophism so well in his "Natural Theology" that I will epitomise his answers for the benefit of my readers:—There are three ways in which an animal may die—by disease, by decay, or by violence. Now, when we consider that the inferior animals have no facilities, on the one hand, for nursing or waiting on one another in sickness, nor, on the other hand,

opportunities for being so attended to, it is manifest that lingering disease and slow decay must be a far greater calamity to them than it is to man with all his conveniences in sick-rooms and hospitals. A violent death, then, with its sudden alarm and soon over, is really the easiest death they can die. And, as far as we can see, they must be removed out of the world in some way or other, or it would become too crowded. Besides, they do not seem to be oppressed with terror or anxiety as we would be, were we in their circumstances. Thus the hare which is in constant danger of being pursued is the happiest of animals, save when it is in the state of being actually pursued, as its sportive gambols testify. Further, in several instances, the fierce pursuer has been furnished by the Creator with a peculiar atmosphere or *aura*, which goes forth from him to his victim when the death of the latter is imminent, so that a pleasant sleep takes the place of terror, and death is made easy. Dr. Livingstone could not understand why he felt so comfortable when he was under the lion's paw, but on some such principle as this.

I beg leave here also to transcribe a passage from Dr. Paley's "Natural Theology," which

will help to defend and uphold the love of God towards man and the lower animals, notwithstanding their unavoidable sufferings: "The predominant tendency of the contrivance indicates the disposition of the designer. The world abounds with contrivances, and all contrivances which we are acquainted with are directed to beneficial purposes. Evil no doubt exists, but is never, that we can perceive, the object of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache; their aching, now and then, is incidental to the contrivance, perhaps inseparable from it; or even, if you will, let it be called a defect of the contrivance; but it is not the object of it. This is a distinction which well deserves to be attended to. In describing implements of husbandry, you would hardly say of the sickle that it is made to cut the reaper's hand, though, from the construction of the instrument, and the manner of using it, this mischief often follows. But if you had occasion to describe instruments of torture or execution, 'This engine,' you would say, 'is to extend the sinews; this to dislocate the joints; this to break the bones; this to scorch the soles of the feet.' Here pain and misery are the very objects of the contrivance. Now, nothing of this sort is

to be found in the works of nature. We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever discovered a system of organisation calculated to produce pain and disease."

I beg leave here likewise to call attention to the reply of Archbishop King to this very objection in his well-known work, "The Origin of Evil." God could not make his creatures like himself—absolutely perfect. If he had done so they would have been, not creatures, but God, which, of course, involves a ridiculous contradiction. Either then the alternative lay before him to create with the possibility and likelihood of considerable suffering, or not to create at all. But he chose, in the exuberance of his overflowing love, to create, because he knew that the blessings of life would exceed the sufferings caused by what Dr. Morison calls "metaphysical evil."*

I might indeed here have drawn a distinction between the evils that come upon man and the lower animals as viewed under the departments of Nature and Providence. But

* See a masterly article to the same effect in the *Evangelical Repository* for June, 1880, by the Rev. Dr. James Morison.

these distresses may be traced sometimes to the original constitution given by the Creator, and sometimes to his dealings with his creatures in daily life, so that they may be considered now under one heading and now under another. And certainly it is to be remembered that not only are these sorrows beneficial in many ways, but no respect of persons can be observed in their incidence; since they fall upon men of all ranks, classes, and ages, and even characters, often with the effect of making the bad good and the good better.

As to the sufferings of little children dying in infancy, we believe them to be inseparable from that imperfection attributable to all finite things, to which we have already referred. Besides, with the doctrine of immortality in our New Testament, especially as taught in Christ's golden words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," we find in their early pains a speedier passage to everlasting bliss.

CHAPTER VIII.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST GOD'S LOVE FROM THE BIBLE.

I AM well aware that multitudes of objections have been urged against the character of God from statements that are made, or are supposed to be made, within the volume of the book ; but I am not only confining my attention here to objections which are made against the special doctrine of the love of God, but primarily to that radical difficulty which is supposed to arise from the origin of evil.

According to the Scriptural account of it, the fall of man occurred, not indeed by the predestinating or necessitating decree, but by the providential permission of God. He allowed the serpent to tempt our mother Eve, the result of which temptation was not only her sin, but that of her husband, and owing to the reaction of their transgressions upon their constitution and character, the depravity, although the voluntary depravity, of us their descendants.


Certain theologians have indeed gone the length of asserting that in as much as God

is said to "work all things after the counsel of his own will," he must have worked the fall of man too. But see how blasphemous an assertion that is, and how entirely it is unsupported by the passage which is quoted in its defence (Eph. 1:11)! Although God worked all his own works, not rashly but according to his wisely and deliberately formed purpose, that is not to say that he is the worker of all the robberies and murders that ever were committed, as well as the transgression of the statute of Eden. In that case, indeed, he would be the grand arch-murderer and arch-robber in the world—if indeed it be not sinful to express even hypothetically the terrible inference that may be legitimately deduced from the doctrine of universal predestination. Suppose that a man were to set a building on fire, or, which comes to the same thing, compel other people to set a building on fire, that his son might have the glory of displaying how efficaciously a new fire-engine would work which he had devised for extinguishing the fire, would it save him from the imputation of being a criminal destroyer of both life and property if it should turn out that a considerable proportion of the houses and their inhabitants were saved by the new apparatus and

the young man's daring, although it was to be regretted that a large number of them perished? Neither would the fact of Christ's work saving an uncounted multitude exonerate the Divine Being from the charge of being the author of sin if he really brought about the fall by a necessitating decree for the purpose of honouring his Son in the salvation of multitudes.

But when the freedom of the human will in the garden of Eden is granted, and all down the ages, a satisfactory reply can be framed. We are surprised that even free-will theologians sometimes admit that the difficulty in connection with the origin of evil is insuperable. The question just resolves itself into the alternative proposition already quoted from Archbishop King—and it admits of even a more pertinent application to rational than to irrational creatures—either the Almighty must have determined to remain in everlasting solitude, or to create moral beings peccable, that is, with the liability to fall or rather possibility of falling attaching to their necessarily imperfect, although free natures, in so far as the power of willing was concerned. Original sin was the first sin. The origin of evil was the free-will of man

rising up in opposition to the good-will of God. It cannot be maintained that our first parents were placed at any disadvantage in the garden of Eden. In fact, they were more favourably circumstanced than we are, in so far as yielding to temptation is concerned. We have been injured by them. We have a downward tendency, the result of their transgression,—although that injury be met by the prevenient grace of God, “the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world”—the Spirit that striveth with us all. But our first parents had no downward tendency to fight against. They had been created free from all sinister bias—although with the power of yielding to temptation—the power of free choice—if, on one side their danger, on another their glory, and the regal crown which the lord of creation wore. Quite true, as Bishop Butler says, that they had not the confirmation in grace which holy people enjoy, and especially which the redeemed in heaven possess, who have been established in habits of obedience to God by a long course of probation and victory—still they were at no disadvantage; for although there was the evil of temptation to fight against, there was *per contra* the severe loss




and punishment with which they were threatened in the event of their disobedience.

If it should still be replied that God should not have created man with such a power to fall, I rejoin, In that case there could have been no creature life, at least no moral creation,—and the Almighty seems to have been yearning with the disinterested desire to make others happy with the high and holy happiness which he possessed himself, namely, the happiness of moral freedom and moral victory. If it should be still further objected that he should not have created man when he foresaw that he would fall, and that many miseries would follow his fall, I reply, But he foresaw also that he would be able to introduce a system of Restoration and Redemption, which would more than repair the injury done by man's lapse and confirm moral beings in allegiance to his throne to an extent of which we can, in this inferior state, form no conception. When we enter the heavenly world and find how the Christian economy has spread the fame of the Eternal amid other orbs whose inhabitants, arriving in the great metropolis of the Universe, will ask the honour of bowing before the Lamb—the Lamb who had died for rebellious humanity—then,

but not till then, will we be able fully to answer the objection that God should not have created man when he foresaw that he would fall. But even with the light which we have in this world I maintain that the origin of evil and the fall of man no more reflects upon the character of God or derogates from that Love which has been proved to be his darling and leading attribute, than it could be justly argued that any parent amongst us was not a kind and loving father because his son had gone astray—a son whom he had hedged round with all manner of restraints from sin and all manner of persuasions to goodness.


Before I pass from this subject of the origin of evil, I beg leave to refer with pleasure, not merely to the statements made on the subject by my able predecessors in this series of books, and especially the Rev. Alexander Brown of Aberdeen whose assigned topic "Sin" led him naturally to take it up, but also to the masterly Theodicy or Vindication of the Divine Glory by Albert Taylor Bledsoe, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy in the University of Mississippi, published in New York in 1853. It seems to me that only prejudice against the author's views



can have kept this book from being better known than it is, and more frequently quoted. It seems to me to annihilate the representations made by Augustinian divines both of the Supra-lapsarian and Sub-lapsarian schools. He shows how great men like Leibnitz, King, Edwards, Chalmers, Dick, and many more of that class could not clear the character of God as to his alleged complicity with Adam's sin, and all other sins, and just because they did not hold the real and regal freedom of the human will. Grant that doctrine and the origin of evil becomes no such mystery as even a large-minded theologian like Tholuck has declared to be insoluble. Its origin simply lies in this fact, that the Almighty could no more force a will that was free than make two and two to be five! For all-wise reasons God determined to make moral beings such as we are; and surely we cannot object to our creation and our life here with its many blessings, notwithstanding the disadvantages which sin has introduced—all of them met, however, by supplies of redeeming and restoring grace. All that God could do to keep man from sinning was in the way of dissuasion; for the moment that necessitation is introduced, either in the

direction of virtue or vice, moral character is destroyed. Melancthon employed the fine word "Synergism" to express the co-operation that exists between God and man in moral government: Bledsoe has used the yet more expressive word "Theandric" (p. 175) to emphasise the double action of God and man that comes out both in human obedience and human disobedience. Thus, and thus alone, is the character of God cleared as to the origin of evil.

Several other statements in God's word are thought to reflect upon his love in this very direction of the origin of evil, which logically should be noticed here. A gentleman who has unfortunately become somewhat sceptical remarked to me the other day, "Is it not said that 'God moved David to number Israel' (2 Sam. 24:1), and then punished him for doing it? What can we think of a God like that?" Now, it is of importance to notice such a statement; for it presents us with a sample of the difficulties which are brought before the minds of young and old in the workshops and factories of the city, and even in retired rural parts amid the beauties of nature, and by which their minds are poisoned. The magazines, too, which richer people read, are full of such



objections. No doubt we have here what may appear to many inquirers to be a serious reflection on the character of God.

If any of my readers had made a statement in a letter which was somewhat difficult of interpretation, would he not be justified in asking that it should be laid alongside of other expressions in the same epistle that cast light upon it? And yet more particularly, if the whole document had been translated out of a foreign language, the genius and style of which was very different from those of the tongue into which it had been rendered, would not such a request be deemed reasonable? Now when we turn up 1 Chron. 21:1, at which the account of the same incident is given, we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Again, we read in the New Testament, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13, 14). Now here we have, in the first place, the plain and direct declaration that it was Satan, the enemy of God and man, who tempted David to perpetrate the proud and boastful census-taking

of which we are informed—a public act indeed that is sometimes useful, but which in David's case seems to have been offensive to the Most High, because prompted by personal vanity and forgetfulness of his obligations to the Lord. Then, in the second place, Jehovah through another of his inspired servants, lays down the universal and most unqualified proposition, that if ever a man should find that he has been tempted to commit sin, he may be absolutely certain that the temptation did not come from the Lord, but that the man had been tempted and led astray of his own lust. Well, when we return to the expression objected to by the sceptic, we are bound to explain it in consistency with the light thrown upon it from these other Scriptures, namely, that the Lord moved David in this modified sense that he allowed the Evil One to shoot hard at him and assail him sharply—before which Satanic suggestion David fell, being led away by the ambition and pride of his own heart. For it is to be recollected by us occidentals, that it is according to the genius of all oriental tongues to ascribe to a powerful individual and *par excellence* the Divine Being, the doing of that which he only permits to be done. On the same principle may the divine


character be cleared from those clouds that have been drawn over it in connection with the sins of Joseph's brethren, which "he meant unto good" (Gen. 50:20); the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (who is also said to have hardened his own heart); "the Assyrian the rod of God's anger," and the Jews who committed murder at the crucifixion of Christ, and thus carried out God's purpose of love. We can see clearly the free agency of man and the criminality of man running all through these narratives—a criminality by which God is provoked, and which, in every case, he eventually punishes, but which nevertheless, out of the depths of the riches of his wisdom and mercy, he overrules to the good of the world and the glory of his great name. Notwithstanding all these assaults, then, which have been made upon the character of God through the misinterpretation of Scripture, according to which he has been virtually held up to be the Author of sin, I maintain that correct exegesis clears the divine character and leaves it without a spot or stain.

CHAPTER IX.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST GOD'S LOVE
FROM RESTRICTIONS IN THE SCHEME OF GRACE.

THE darkest cloud, however, that has been drawn over the character of God, and by which the lustre of his Love has been obscured, has consisted in the persistent representations of certain theologians to the effect that the scheme of redemption which the Bible reveals, and which Christ himself specially revealed, was undertaken on behalf of only a limited portion of the family of man, to whom, indeed, the benefits of that dispensation of grace have been unconditionally restricted.

If an earthly parent should have favourites and leave his money, for example, to one half of his family and leave the other half without a shilling, who had as good a claim upon his generosity as the rest, would not his character of love and equity be darkened in the estimation of survivors who might come to understand the particulars of his will? In modern legislation, indeed, provision has been made for a child's being able to assert his right against such testamentary injustice. And how can we defend the character of our God as a




God of love, if he has sent his Son to die for only a portion of the family of man, and shut out the rest by an unconditional decree from all the benefits of that work of grace?

But blessed be God!—such is not the teaching of Scripture when rightly understood. The Lord revealed himself to St. Peter on the house-top at Joppa as “of a truth no respecter of persons.” Oh that many of our leaders of theological thought would fall into a trance, or dream some dream that would produce as remarkable an effect upon their ideas of God's love to man as that “sheet let down” produced upon Peter's! Up till that day he was a strict limitarian, believing and preaching that salvation was confined to the Jews, but ever afterwards he exclaimed to Gentiles as well as Jews, “The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

As to the election of grace, are men not commanded by this very apostle Peter to “make their calling and election sure”? (2 Peter 1:10). A gentleman told me that his father always kept a pin in his Bible at the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It darkened in his estimation the character of God as a God of love. What a pity that he

had no evangelist, such as the eunuch was favoured with, to sit down in his carriage or his parlour beside him and open to him the Scriptures! What a pity that he did not allow Paul in that much misunderstood chapter to explain himself; for when he emerges from the intricacies of his argument, what is its practical outcome? Why, just this: that the Gentiles had believed and had been elected as believers, and that the Israelites would not believe on Christ the tried stone, and therefore had been rejected (Rom. 9: 30-33). Thus is the character of God cleared; thus are his ways justified to man.

As to the extent of the atonement of Christ, it is distinctly asserted that he "tasted death for every man;" that he became "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" and that he gave himself "a ransom for all" (Heb. 2: 9; 1 John 2: 2; 1 Tim. 2: 6). Could asseverations be more unqualified or more fully calculated to clear the character of God? But because the Saviour in a certain connection declared that he "gave his life for the sheep," forgetting that he had died for all the sheep who had ever gone astray (Is. 53: 6), men have asserted that none will ever perish for whom he died. Thus timid souls are



perplexed and sent back into their hearts, exclaiming, "Alas! we are so vile, surely, surely he never died for us!"

While visiting a member of my own congregation the other day, I was unexpectedly confronted with a minister of the Church of Scotland, of great ability and wide fame, who had come to pay a friendly call also. When this gentleman was led to understand who I was, after making some kind, complimentary statements, he added, "I never could hold that any man could perish for whom Christ died." I replied, "How, then, could Paul say, 'Destroy not with thy meat the weak brother for whom Christ died'? And how could Peter say of the false teachers, that 'they denied the Lord that bought them, and brought upon themselves swift destruction'?" (2 Peter 2:1). The gentleman seemed to be taken completely aback, and even stunned. All he could get out was, that "he had never thought of these texts, and would need to study them." Most certainly they need to be studied, and their study will serve to clear, in the estimation of multitudes, the character of God. For on any other principle, "How could God judge the world," and charge the wicked with the crime of unbelief, with the crime of rejecting One

who had never atoned for their sins, but had deliberately left them out of his purpose of redeeming love?

Many teach also unconditional restrictions as to the work of the Holy Spirit. Their doctrine is that only he can enlighten, and yet God has unconditionally, and from all eternity, decreed to give the enlightenment only to some. Alas! how they darken the character of God! Some have felt disposed to pin up the sixth chapter of John's gospel, as others have pinned up the ninth of the Romans. But their distress came from the misapprehension of the word of God. True, "No man can come unto Christ unless the Father draws;" but let men yield to the initial drawing (see Stier on the "Words of the Lord Jesus" *in loc*) by hearing and learning of Christ, and they will all be taught of God, and given by the Father to the Son! And what really is the Scriptural representation of the Holy Spirit's work that is given from Genesis to Revelations? That he strives with all—that he may be grieved—vexed—quenched—despised! Yea, that rebellious men do final despite to the Spirit of grace! Ah! judge not our God's character by the erroneous representations of theologians. They really

amount to unintentional slanders on the Almighty. What is his real attitude towards us? It is this: "All day long I have stretched out my hand unto a disobedient and a gain-saying people!" "Behold! I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." Blessed be his name!

CHAPTER X.

GOD'S CHARACTER YET MORE FULLY CLEARED.

I FIND that I have reached the key-stone of the arch on which my whole defence of the divine character is built. I therefore linger a little longer around this question, What is the account which God gives us himself of the extent of his saving love?

When he tells us of the mission of his Son he does not say that he had sent him for the benefit of a few, but he says, "God so loved the world that he gave his Only-Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the

world, but that the world through him might be saved." Mr. Joseph Cook, of Boston, who visited this country lately, spoke of the effect that might be produced upon the minds of men if the sun rose some morning with these words inscribed upon it, "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!" May we not borrow the thought and say, Might not the sun rise with these words inscribed upon its face, teaching not the holiness but the world-wide love of Jehovah, so clearly are they revealed in the volume of the book: "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON."

And what view did Christ himself give of the object of his mission, if it should be supposed that the words just quoted dropped from the pen of the Evangelist himself? Did he represent himself as having been sent into the world for the benefit of only a small portion of the human family? Let us listen to him as he speaks during the days of his public ministry, both in Galilee and in Jerusalem: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51); "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 9:28); "In the last day, that great day

of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink " (John 7 : 37). Here is one who not only is conscious of divine power, but also feels love in his heart burning towards the whole family of man whom he has come to seek and to save. How terribly misleading such utterances must be if God's desire was all along to bless only a favoured portion of the family of man! Suppose that Rothschild and other millionaires should come down from London to visit three noblemen in our neighbourhood, and cheer them with their company. Would it not be most inconsistent with the object of their visit, and indeed most untruthful, if any one should allege concerning them that they had come down to visit the whole of Scotland, and that if any poor person in Glasgow or Dundee, or any of our towns, would only come to them or send to them a statement of their wants all these wants would be supplied? Such a contradiction would not be more glaring than that which obtains between these declarations of Christ as to his world-wide love and the representations of his limited designs, which some theologians have put into his lips.

Listen, also, to the commission which Christ

delivered to his disciples before he left this world, and which was meant to be the working orders of the church to the end of time. A king's mind may be learned from the instructions delivered to his ambassadors, and surely we may read the heart of the Son of God in his parting directions to his followers. Did he tell them to go into the world and seek out a few here and a few there to whom the message of salvation was to be addressed? Verily no. His words were, "GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE" (Mark 16:15). These words also deserve to be inscribed upon the sun for their God-honouring universality and luminosity. O do they not clear the character of God? Every creature! As if he had said, Go to the Scythian amid the northern snows, the Athenian among his chiselled temples and statues, the Roman whose legions march from the Tiber round the world, the African beneath the vertical sun, the Persian near the cradle of the human race, and tell them that I died to save them all. And it is plain that the church in her grand itinerancies in this nineteenth century has understood these marching orders as the old apostles did in the first century; for modern missionaries

are never taught to say concerning any new country that is opened up, "Are there any of the Lord's favourites here? Perhaps not!" but without any hesitation, they are encouraged to fling themselves into new regions, where the gospel never was preached before, and preach it to every creature. Therefore, like Williams fifty years ago, Macfarlane to-day has anchored his mission ships at any Polynesian Isle that may have appeared suddenly in view, and has told the wondering natives of God's gift and Calvary's sacrifice! Has Livingstone discovered millions of people dwelling on the banks of new rivers and the shores of new lakes far in the interior of the land of Ham? Already the Christian Church, true to the missionary spirit of her great founder, has sent self-denying missionaries thither with their lives in their hands and the love of Christ in their hearts. In some instances wearing the Chinese dress and imitating the Chinese manners on the shores of the Yellow Sea, or far inland on the banks of the Hoangho, refined ladies and gentlemen, counting all things loss for Christ's sake, are preaching the gospel to the teeming millions of the celestial empire, and are raising their hearts' aspirations to an empire truly celestial,

by inducing them to exchange the dry maxims of Confucius for the fervent promises of Christ. The fair Island of Formosa smiles all the fairer that Mackay, the apostolic Canadian missionary, wearing its native dress, also has itinerated from coast to coast, proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Japan, the Britain of the East, has been taught the truth as it is in Jesus by the Britain of the West, while the banks of the Ganges and the Irrawaddy have re-echoed the gospel herald's voice and the praises of the Lamb. Of a truth the Church does not really believe the limited gospel of the creeds. She shows by her conduct that she regards the gospel to be as free as the water of the ocean or the winds of heaven. In other words, she wipes away the libel which systematic theology too often seems to cast upon the character of God.

This same conclusion as to the world-wide freeness of the gospel may be triumphantly drawn from the fact that man is appealed to for the exercise of faith and the surrender of his heart to God. If, indeed, he had been treated as a machine by Jehovah in the scheme of grace; if no invitation, entreaty or command to repent, believe, love and obey had been addressed to him; if the conversion

of the soul had been like the sudden and secret rapture our millennarian friends speak of—some here and some there caught up into the third heavens of a regenerated state, they know not how, and the rest left without any call or command or proffered help, in that case we might admit this limited gospel which so darkens God's character, although with grief, to be the scriptural view. But how very different is the reality! In the New Testament, as well as in the Old, God the Saviour appears as a suppliant before man, beseeching him to be reconciled and submit to his overtures of mercy, bringing to bear upon him not the irresistible might of omnipotence—which were as great an inconsistency in the case of a moral being as for Him to entreat a planet to roll, or a river to flow—but the might of loving persuasion, rejoicing over a recovered heart when the persuasion is successful, but still weeping over earth's impenitent cities, towns, villages and rural districts as Immanuel wept over defiant Jerusalem, and crying as he did in Isaiah's day, "What could have been done more that I have not done" (Is. 5:4)? The preachers of the gospel in our day, like Paul and Silas in theirs, are instructed to say

concerning their hearers, thus making a distinction that foreshadows the division of the judgment seat, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). That is God's own account of the difference between the saved and the unsaved, the elect and the non-elect. The saved are they who yield to the grace that has been provided for all; the unsaved are they who reject it. Thus the character of God is cleared. We can hold it up to the sceptic and the mocker as a character of love without a stain or a flaw, and so splendid withal as to be calculated to shine away the darkness of their unbelief and to make mockery die into praise.


We remember that Mr. Newman Hall remarked in his book on "Sacrifice," published twenty-five years ago, that there were just about half-a-dozen passages of Scripture that seemed to teach a limitation of God's saving love; while there are hundreds that declare it to be unlimited; and he asks whether should the hundreds be explained in the light of the half-dozen, or the half-dozen in the light of the hundreds? That question is easily answered, and especially

when, as the Theologians of the Evangelical Union maintain, the half-dozen when rightly understood are really luminous with the world-wide love of God. Bledsoe, the distinguished American, in the grand Theodicy to which we have already referred, after having proved God's love to be co-extensive with the race, thinks it necessary to refer to only one passage which was thought in his district of country to darken that doctrine with its penumbra of gloom, "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate." Of course he replies that the whole context in Romans viii. makes it plain that the foreknown are they who love God — and that if a man will only love God, he may call himself both foreknown and predestinated too. He adds no more; and we add no more. Has the cloud not been withdrawn that seemed to darken the character of God? And lo! do we not behold "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"?

CHAPTER XI.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

IN passing from the attribute of love to the attribute of justice, we are reminded of the fact that a much lamented brother beloved, the Rev. Dr. William Bathgate, of Kilmarnock, in the first work which came from his accomplished pen, entitled "The Moral Character of God," pursued a different course. Taking the two inspired statements of the Apostle John as his authority, "God is Light and God is Love," he declared all the moral attributes of God to be comprehended under these two definitions—the first of which he considered to be expressive of Holiness and the second of Benevolence. This is doubtless quite correct, and yet we can see how good may be done by particularising in a treatise like that which we are composing all the moral attributes of the Deity. Both scientific and practical men tell us that all the colours of the rainbow may be included under red, yellow, and blue, of which they may be represented as being just so many modes or diversities; still, in a treatise on colours, we would think it proper to give



prominent places to green, orange, indigo, and violet as well. Therefore we adhere to the programme which we have already laid down.

Our supposed inquirer has been brought to the knowledge of the truth that the Lord is good and good unto all; but if no other instructions were given to him there would be a danger that his view of God's character would be incomplete, and that therefore their effect upon his own character would partake of the incompleteness, and certainly would not be so beneficial as the Divine Author of the great Gospel Economy intends.


God is love; but does that mean that he is all love? Yes, all love in the widest and most comprehensive sense—a sense, however, which does not suit the limited notions of those who fancy that God is all mercy. The poet says,

“A God all mercy were a God unjust,”

and it will be our aim in this chapter to show that God is not love at the expense of his justice; in other words, that he is “a just God and a Saviour.” For if our inquirer fancied that God were all mercy, he might go on to sin with a high hand, supposing that he might sin with impunity, and thus be overtaken at last with the judgments of our God; since “our God is a consuming fire.”

Let our inquirer look about him and take note how, although God is loving and kind, man suffers every day for his sins. We have already called his attention to the miseries that have come upon the race through sin viewed collectively—that sin which our first parent introduced into the world, with all its consequent woes; but we wish him now to contemplate the effects which sin produces upon the individual. Let him observe the drunkard's bloated face and palsied trembling hand—the premonitory intimations of his premature end that is fast approaching. Let him see the worn out debauchee on his consumptive bed, and remark particularly that such terrible retribution visits men every day under the government of that God “whose Nature and whose Name is Love.” Nor let him suppose that he weakens the force of our remark by saying that such judgments come by natural law; for what is the daily operation of natural law but the daily operation of God?—the living, loving, but just God, who has affixed these penalties to sin that men might be warned away from its commission.

Let him also consider how society punishes the bad man and rewards the good. God's hand and arrangement are in the frowns of his fellow-men as well as in the inroads of



disease. Bishop Butler, in his immortal Analogy between Natural and Revealed religion has powerfully observed that we may predict the punishment of sin in a future state from its punishment here in the respect which virtue commands and the disrespect which attends vice. I quote the comparison because it brings out clearly the lesson at which I am aiming, namely, that that God who is love is also righteous—that his judgments are all round about us as well as his tender mercies.

Let me take our inquirer to God's Word, and he will find justice and mercy blended there too,—sin punished, if the sinner be still yearned over. Lo! Adam and Eve expelled from Eden's bowers because they have broken the commandments of God! Behold the old world overwhelmed on account of sin, and Pharaoh of Egypt with his hosts buried in the Red Sea because they had hardened their hearts against God's people and would not let them go! And what is the history even of the Israelites that were saved all down the centuries but the history of judgments from a just God at the hands of Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians,—if also the history of mercies received at the hands of a God of love? Indeed, as we close the Bible at its final book

after perusing it, and give expression to the effect its entire contents have had upon our minds, we cannot find better words than the Psalmist's to epitomise the whole, "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

Further, as the curtain that hid futurity rises, and the new heavens and the new earth appear, what scene meets our gaze as the outcome of all God's dealings here with man? What throne is that which appears to view? It is a great white throne—a throne of judgment. Seated on it the just God will judge men according to the deeds done in the body. A left hand shall be there for them who have rejected salvation, as well as a right hand for those who have accepted it. Of a truth, if we would understand the character of our God aright, we must take into account his justice as well as his grace.

The same great lesson we learn at the Cross of Calvary. We have already shown our inquirer the love that shines out there; let us also show him the righteousness.

We would greatly err if we should maintain that God sustains towards man only the relation of a father, and if we were to leave out of view the fact that he is also a king, who

has promulgated laws which are to be obeyed—laws, moreover, which are sanctioned by penalties to be inflicted in the event of disobedience. When man was created he was placed under a special law, attached to which was a threatening of punishment—punishment which really was inflicted when the law was broken. Now Adam in the garden was a type or representative of the whole race, and consequently the entire family of man is also to be regarded as having been placed by Jehovah under law, either the law written upon the heart, or a distinct written revelation, as the Apostle Paul argues in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, or both.

Even the heathen, he maintains, “having not the law (in the second sense) are a law unto themselves (in the first sense), which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing (approving) one another” (Rom. 2:14, 15). Now the apostle maintains that they who possess this inward light have a sufficiency of privilege and commandment to bring them in guilty before God if they nevertheless walk in darkness. And do we not all feel that Conscience is armed with

divine authority, and that, being God's Deputy, she carries with her his penal sanctions? We may argue future punishment from the alarms of an awakened conscience alone. We may argue the need of an atonement from the same powerful premiss.

Whether we hold that the ground of moral obligation lies in the right as right ("Will the right because it is right," as Cousin and Kant have maintained) or that it lies in a regard for the value of universal being (Edwards, Finney, etc.), we must admit that these sacred duties are revealed in the reason of universal humanity, wherever there is maturity and soundness of mind. We feel that falsehood, theft and murder are sinful, and that when we perpetrate such deeds we are deserving of punishment. We feel, moreover, as intuitively, that selfishness is moral wrong—that the value of the being of our neighbours in the aggregate is much greater than our own, and especially that the value of the being of the Infinite Creator of the universe is infinitely greater than our own, and that therefore we "invert the pyramid of interests" when we live selfishly, neglecting the Infinite and the neighbour, for the sake of our own little selves, as if magnified, in our own eyes, out

of pigmy finitude into all-important infinitude. What sin! What daring impiety! Surely the righteous Lawgiver cannot pass over with impunity such rebellion against his throne.

But this impiety becomes yet more palpable when men have been favoured with a written revelation, like the Jews of old, to whom all the statutes of the Mosaic dispensation were announced, or the nations of the earth, who have been blessed with the Bible, consisting of the Old Testament containing the Decalogue and many other minute calls to virtue and holiness, and the New Testament containing the Dialogue with all the other precious commandments which have been spoken by Christ and his apostles. Can a man be held guiltless who has heard addressed to him, not only by the voice within the heart, such calls as "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but also by the living voice of prophecy or of the printed book, and yet commits these crimes? Or the man who has been enjoined to love his God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself by Jesus and Paul, as well as by his conscience, and yet tramples such statutes under foot?—can he be held guiltless? Verily nay.

Now the Bible declares that men have wilfully and culpably broken these laws, and thus defied the Almighty—and human experience and observation confirm the charge with their deep and doleful Amen. Not to refer to other Scriptures, let me call special attention to the teaching of St. Paul in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans. He there proves both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin, ending his melancholy catalogue of transgression by the notable words, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). The word rendered "guilty" here (*ἰπρόδικος*) means literally, and according to classical as well as New Testament usage, *liable to penalty*.

It is plain, then, according to Biblical representation, that man, having broken the laws of his Moral Governor, the penalty must needs fall upon him. If the penalties attached to our laws were never enforced, of what value would they be? If we had no prisons or penitentiaries, life in Britain would be unendurable. And will the government of the King of kings be less vigorously upheld

•

than that of earthly monarchs? Will they who have learned their jurisprudence and principles of administration from his book excel him in equity and the maintenance of order?

We are informed in the Memoirs of the late Charles S. Finney, President of the Oberlin Institute, Ohio, U.S., that the first ray of light that broke in upon the scepticism of his youth came from the study of law in the office of the lawyer to whom he had been articulated. *Blackstone's Commentaries* always referred to the Bible, and even leaned back upon it as their original authority. He was thus led to study God's book, and accept it as a guiding light from Heaven.


But it is asserted that God forgives men when they repent; and that their sorrow for sin is sufficient atonement for their sin. That is only the theory of certain theologians, not the representation of the Bible when patiently and comprehensively viewed. Besides, if every one in Britain who truly repented of crimes should be set free, what security would there be for property or life or limb? Such an usage would bring British law into contempt; and, as far as we can see, it would bring Divine law into contempt also throughout the universe.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BIBLE ON GOD'S JUSTICE.

BUT without arguing the point any further from what might be called the reasonableness of the case, let us ask, What saith the Word of God on the point of the forgiveness of human transgression? Is it there represented as a mere fatherly grant, or as the bestowment of a Governor who sees after the claims of law, while, at the same, he pardons the guilty? Most certainly the latter.

What saith the Scripture—the book from which all our theology should be reverently drawn? I maintain that the Sun of Righteousness in the Bible is to me an infinitely greater wonder than the natural sun in the heavens every day. I could never have conceived of such a marvel as the solar system if it had not been placed before my eyes by the Almighty, and if I had not been called into being as one of the humble units in the family of moral agents who find on the planet Earth a daily oratory for praise and prayer. And I could as little have dreamt of such a glorious Personage as Jesus Christ slain for my sins and raised again for my justification if the




great doctrine had not been revealed. But now that it is revealed, how grandly it shines in the spiritual firmament! What glory it reflects on Him who placed it there, and what honour on man, in whose behalf the magnificent theanthropy and sacrifice have been displayed and offered up.

Hear what the inspired Paul says after he has brought in all the world guilty before God, and declared that the law which condemns could not save: "Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: *that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.*"

While I write the whole country heaves with the excitement of Irish discontent. Already arrests have been made, and offenders have been lodged in prison. That sister isle has always been, as the great Sir Robert Peel said, "the British statesman's greatest difficulty." But suppose that the idea had been suggested, as the result of deep and prolonged deliberation among our Queen's Ministers, that it might be better to make an attempt to

conquer them by love, not law-forgetting but law-respecting love, by atonement—propitiation—the very principle of the gospel of Christ—which has a double, Janus-reference, both to the broken law that it might be magnified, and the alienated heart of the disaffected, that it might be reconciled. Suppose that Her Majesty's eldest son, cordially entering into the Governmental scheme of his august mother and the Ministry, should cross the Channel and lie in a cold damp prison three days and three nights, or three weeks, or even three months, risking his life and deeply condescending to this shame and suffering for the sake of the rebellious, and that on the ground of his mediation forgiveness should be preached to all the rebels, and should be actually enjoyed by them in immediate liberty and the comforts of life, on the single condition of confessing their error and accepting the free gift for the sake of the atonement of the Prince. O, see him set forth as a propitiation! See him leave the cold prison, weak but satisfied, amid the cheers of a reconciled and conquered community—conquered by love and atonement! In such a case our Sovereign would shine forth just, yet justifying the rebellious. We need not apply the similitude.



It is but a faint representation of the way in which the Justice of God and the Love of God have met gloriously and harmoniously at the Cross. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs out of the earth." O see him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life springing from the earth, our victorious representative. He has lain in the prison long enough for us. Our hostage has been set free! And now as accepted and justifying, sanctifying righteousness, he looks down from heaven high (Ps. 85:10, 11; Rom. 3).

If it should be objected that it would be injustice to have allowed him, the innocent, to suffer for us, and that thus instead of a magnification, the atonement is a degradation, of righteousness,—I reply, In the illustration used no injustice was done to our Queen's son. He was a freely consenting party. He wished to bind the sons of Erin to his mother's throne. My readers will remember One who said, "No man taketh my life from me."

This view of Christ's death is consistent with the representations of Scripture everywhere: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." "He laid upon him the iniquities of all." "He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us."

Besides, the sin-offerings and trespass-offerings and burnt-offerings of the Levitical economy in which the blood shed was an "atonement for the soul," while the hand laid on the piacular victim symbolically transferred to the innocent substitute the guilt of the offerer—all these cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God is coming." And John the Baptist took up the cry and exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God is come, which taketh away the sin of the world!"—while Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, added, "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

But what I have chiefly to do with in this treatise is the light which the atonement casts on the character of God. He is love, but not weak love—strong, immortal, holy, righteous love. While forgiving man he can appeal to the whole universe that he has not been unmindful of the claims of law. No planet, or other orb inhabited by moral beings, dare violate his commands expecting to be easily forgiven. The incarnation is not likely to be repeated. Calvary's is too painful and costly a sacrifice to be often offered. Let not fools make a mock at sin.

O the lustre, the symmetry, the concinnity of the character of God! It is related of Sir

Walter Scott that, when he was Sheriff of Selkirkshire, a man was brought before him, charged with a crime, who had been his school-fellow in youth, but had become degraded through intemperance. When Sir Walter, as judge, had pronounced sentence upon him, with the alternative of a fine, the prisoner at the bar upbraided him with cruel forgetfulness of the days when they had been "boys together." Meekly and mercifully the accomplished judge replied, "No, poor man, I do not forget these days, although my public duty compelled me to pronounce the sentence against you; and, to show you my sincerity, I will pay your fine myself, and take you home to dine with me." Here we have a faint type of the character of our Heavenly Father—"a Just God and a Saviour." He may be said to have paid the world's fine with the sacrifice and sufferings of his Only-Begotten Son, and now invites us to sit down with him at the feast of love. Let us not reject his kind offices or refuse his hospitable offer.

Our imaginary inquirer is satisfied. He rejoices in the light which Calvary casts upon the King's justice as well as the Father's love. He is ready to join in the song of those who stand on the sea of glass, "Great and marvel-

lous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

I have considered the justice of God chiefly in its relation to the redemption of man. As this volume, however, is intended not merely to elucidate the true character of God, but also to test theological dogmas by the principles laid down, in so far as these dogmas may have darkened that character, I add here a few corollaries deduced from the premiss of the divine justice, which I respectfully submit to the consideration of my Christian readers. It is plain that I might have made each proposition the basis of an extended argument, but the space at my disposal forbids such amplification ; besides, it sometimes happens that truth shines brightest in a condensed and unextended form.

1. If any infant should be declared worthy of punishment, either in this world or the next, because it possessed a sinful nature—the sinfulness of which nature it could not help, inasmuch as such a sentence would be manifestly unjust, and would not be upheld if appealed against, in a parallel case, in any court of law in the kingdom, such a dogma must be at once and for ever cashiered as being unworthy of that God who is just as well as merciful.

2. If any theologian should further maintain that man—adult man—is utterly unable to keep the commandments of God—whether these commandments have been issued more immediately in connection with the Mosaic or Christian dispensation—or, in other words, whether they respect the keeping of the law, or the believing of the gospel—such inability being the necessary result of Adam's fall, and therefore such as the man could in no way help; and if said theologian should nevertheless hold that the unfortunate members of the human family are bound to keep these commandments and believe that gospel, no adequate compensating grace having been provided for all the individuals so circumstanced, as such requirements from such a Being would be manifestly unjust, and would be declared to be so by any accredited judge within these realms, when a similar case might be represented to him, the dogma in question must needs be reprobated as being altogether unworthy of that God who is just as well as merciful.

3. If it should be maintained that heathens who have never heard the gospel must, notwithstanding, for not believing it perish, that

dogma also must be rejected as being inconsistent with the justice of God.

4. If it should be maintained that although Christ never shed his blood for multitudes of human beings they, nevertheless, should be condemned for not believing upon him,—as this requirement also would be unjust, it must be held to be unworthy of him who is righteous in all his ways.

5. If it should be maintained that the influence of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to conversion, and that, nevertheless, it be required of all men to turn to the Lord, although the indispensable grace of the Divine Spirit is withheld from multitudes called the unconditionally reprobate, this dogma also must be rejected as being unworthy of the God of righteousness.

“Judge, I pray you,” saith the Lord, “betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:3, 4.)

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MERCY OF GOD.

WE have already shown our imaginary inquirer that God is love, and also that God's love is not conveyed to us at the expense of his justice, but is rather revealed to us in strict conformity with the demands of that attribute, and yet so that the loving kindness of the Lord is thereby more signally displayed.

I advance now to the consideration of another attribute of the Divine character—namely, the mercy or mercifulness or compassion of God—that is, his love as displayed towards the guilty and wrath-deserving.

I am aware that I have to some extent anticipated the argument of this chapter, because I could not open up the love of God without discussing his mercy, since man has sinned against him; and especially I could not show how the love of God reaches man in consistency with his justice, without specially noticing that august scheme of grace by means of which the mercy of God is communicated to us—namely, the redemptive scheme of Calvary. Still, in a treatise which is designed to illustrate the character of God,

attribute by attribute, it may be of importance to give separate consideration to each, even although there may be unavoidable repetition in the reasoning and illustrations employed.

We might indeed here also argue *a priori*, the mercifulness of God; for when we take for granted his perfection, as we are warranted in such a practical treatise as this to do, and when we have now proved that God is love, it may be concluded by a kind of necessary inference, that such a Being would show his love to the guilty and the perishing, they being the individuals who need it most.

The important distinction has already been hinted at, that when the love of God rests upon the holy and the obedient in this great moral empire, it assumes the aspect and takes the name of complacency, or complacential delight; whereas, when it terminates on the undeserving and sinful, it takes the name of compassion.

Accordingly, we find in the Holy Scriptures that God is said to be "plenteous in mercy," to have even "a multitude of mercies"; nay more, as we have already seen, it is even said that "his tender mercies are over all his works." Especially in the New Testament, as we would expect, his mercy is said to flow to

us abundantly through Jesus Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his *abundant mercy* hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1 : 3). "But God, who is *rich in mercy*, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2 : 4, 5).

I have had in my day not a little to do with the visitation of prisoners, even prisoners doomed to die, and I have always found it to be extremely difficult, nay impossible, where no palliative plea could be advanced, to obtain pardon for them, or even the mitigation of penalty, and that too under the government of a gracious Queen. But our Heavenly Father (blessed be his name!), in the super-abounding greatness of his love, wisdom, and power, has introduced into his scheme of the government of this world that great atonement already referred to, through which he is able to show mercy even to the rebellious. Because we have an High Priest above pleading for us and showing the wounds of the tree, "Let us therefore," says the apostle, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may

obtain *mercy* and find grace to help in time of need."

Thus understood to be a God revealed in Christ, both in the Old Testament and the New, there is no contradiction between the representation of God's mercy already given—of justice and mercy meeting together, and the statement of Psalm 52:8, for example, "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever," or the view given in the parable of the Prodigal Son of the character of God. For in both cases who speaks? He who entered into covenant with the Hebrews of old by sacrifice, and revealed himself eighteen hundred years ago in the person of the Atoning Lamb. He is the God who speaks of his mercy in the Old Testament and who stands with open arms in the New Testament beseeching the prodigal to run to his bosom and be saved. We hear it frequently objected to the doctrine of the atonement that there is no place for it in the parable of the Prodigal Son, but let it ever be remembered that the weeping Father of that matchless illustration is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who said in the days of his flesh, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The grief, the tears, the marks of care in the countenance, the changed appear-

ance, and the stooping form of the suffering Father in the parable occupy, to a considerable extent, the place of the Atonement of the Lamb.

But what a view have we here of the merciful character of God! He is standing with outstretched arms to welcome the vilest prodigal back again who will only relent and repent and seek his face in humiliation of soul. He will give the penny of eternal life even at the eleventh hour. He will anticipate and arrest by the profuse liberality of his love the broken-hearted cries of the applicant for mercy, giving a robe instead of rebuke, a ring instead of reviling, and a grand reception instead of a cold repulse. Pharisees may say, "He has devoured his living with harlots," or "This woman is a sinner;" but our Father cries, "They are forgiven much, and will love much in return: I accept them. O ye who have not fallen so far, accept them too." Such is the character of our merciful God.

It strikes me that I cannot do better in further elucidation of this subject than bring before the minds of my readers the wonderful proclamation of his name, and revelation of his character given by Jehovah himself to Moses in mount Sinai, as these are recorded

in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Book of Exodus ; for who can tell us the character of God better than God himself? And indeed if we had been restricted within the dimensions of a brief essay, and had desired as nervously and concisely as possible to compress the entire contents of this book within a limited space, we could not have done better than give to our readers an exposition of the wondrous words uttered by the Lord concerning his own Name to that honoured servant who was privileged to enjoy repeated interviews with the Great I Am.

The circumstances were indeed remarkable. The children of Israel had grievously sinned in the matter of the golden calf, and God in his anger had refused to accompany them to the promised land. But Moses had earnestly prayed for the Lord's indispensable presence to go with the host, when Jehovah graciously yielded and said, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken." Whereupon Moses was emboldened to present another prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (Ex. 33 : 18). Perhaps this Hebrew mediator, who had seen the burning bush and the hovering cloud of the Shechinah, had a desire to get a glimpse of the inner majesty of the very Essence of

God. He was graciously informed, however, that no man still in the flesh could see that dazzling brightness and live. Yet two great honours would be bestowed upon him; for the Lord loved the man who had been so true and leal-hearted to his God. If he would come up early in the morning to mount Sinai, carrying in his hands two fresh stone tablets to be inscribed with the ten commandments again, the Lord would do this for him: he would put him into a cleft of the rock and would cover him with his hand—that is, with some obscuring cloud, while he was in the act of passing by. Then, after the glory of the Divine countenance had passed, he would remove that obscuring hand or cloud, so that Moses, to whom it would be death to look upon the face, might behold the receding back of this theanthropic vision; for it is plain that here once more the bodily shape of the Word yet to become flesh was anticipated. Nor was this all. While in the act of passing the mouth of the cave, the Lord would proclaim his true character—his moral character—his true glory; for if Moses was brought to understand what the glorious character of Jehovah really was, that lesson would show him the glory of the Divine Being far more fully than

the exhibition of any pillar of fire, or pillar of cloud, or dangerous dazzling brightness within the same, could have done.

Oh! let us stand in imagination in the cleft within that lofty cliff of Sinai, beside the son of Amram, who was drawn from the Nile, and let our imaginary inquirer stand beside us whom we have endeavoured to instruct hitherto. He is about to get the grandest lesson of all, and from God's own lips. It is early in the morning. The world lies far below us, but the upper peak of Sinai is still some hundreds of feet above us; and from that upper peak the hovering Shechinah begins to descend with "the likeness as the appearance of a man" within it. A mist spreads over the mouth of the cave, in mercy dimming the passing glory. But hark! a voice speaks as the veiled "similitude" passes by. It is Jehovah revealing his own character to man. Let us listen within the cave, as if we never heard the wondrous words before, which now, let us suppose for the first time, fall upon human ear:—

"Jehovah, Jehovah! the Mighty One, merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abundant in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity and trans-

gression and sin ; who yet by no means will acquit the guilty ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation."

How encouraging to us frail children of a day and sinful sons and daughters of Adam this proclamation of the Divine name and character ! How cheering to us to know that God is so gracious ; and yet something comes in near the end that warns us not to tamper with his mercy or count upon it if we continue in the love of sin, even as we have already seen that the love of God goes hand in hand with his justice, both in forgiving sin and in punishing the disobedient. Let us study the oracle eagerly, asking the meaning of each separate word, for these truly are words of life and death. Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out the mouth of God.

First of all, then, God twice declares himself to be Jehovah, the Self-existent One, and *El*, the Mighty One. How admirable a basis this for the subsequent superstructure of the mercifulness of God ! If he were a weak being, his mercy would be little worth. But lo ! he is the Omnipotent, Self-existent Deity,

and yet we do not need to dread him, as if he were our enemy, even although we have sinned against him; for listen! "He is Jehovah, Jehovah, the Mighty One, merciful and gracious." The word translated merciful (*rachum*) means literally *tender as a mother*, and in its root form is applied, not only to a human parent cherishing an infant, but to the love of a bird towards her callow young. So that if we would rightly understand the affection that glows in the heart of God towards us, let us look at yonder hen rushing to protect her chickens from the descending beast of prey, at yonder mother content to sit up all night with her sick child, or running with her arms extended to clasp him to her heart when he had grown up to years of manhood, and had wandered far, not only from home, but from the paths of virtue and purity. Perhaps the stern father would not receive him; but the tender mother has rushed to the gate to take him in, for he is the *son of her womb*. Such is the literal force of the word used in the original tongue; and such, O reader! is the love of thy God to thee. But suppose that her son, pursued by the officers of justice, whispers in his mother's ear:—"I have committed a crime, and the detectives

are on my heels." When she learns that money can buy him off, she goes to her secret store and gives out all her savings that she may be allowed to keep her son—her unworthy son—in her own home and beneath her eye. Such also, O my reader! is the mercy of thy God, as it has been revealed in the Cross to thee.

The second word the Lord used to show his character is translated "gracious." The adjective in the original Hebrew is *chanun*. It comes from a verb which means to turn or incline. In fact, it represents one who bows graciously towards some inferior personage, and does not hold himself haughtily aloft and aloof. The question is just that which was in the mind of Queen Esther as she drew near to Ahasuerus:—"Will he incline to me?" "Will he be gracious to me?" Lo! he stoops down graciously and smiles upon her as he extends the sceptre! Alas! we needed a blood-besprinkled sceptre, for we had broken the laws of our sovereign King; but see! the blood-besprinkled sceptre of Calvary is held out to us by him who graciously inclines towards our guilty race. "We call that *haninah*," says Maimonides, "which we bestow upon any man to whom we owe no-

thing." It is on this footing, O reader, that God shows his *haninah*, his graciousness, to thee. Thou dost not deserve it; and yet it streams to thee benignly from thy Father's loving heart and thy Brother's atoning death.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

I HAVE made a break here, not only for the convenience of my readers, but also because we have, if not a distinct attribute of the moral character of God next brought before us in this grand Sinaitic oracle, yet so distinct an aspect of the mercy of our Heavenly Father as to justify a new chapter in our treatise. And we shall find that this idea of *continuance*, both in direct goodness and the punishment of sin, extends more or less henceforth to the close of the Divine utterance.

The word translated long-suffering (in the Hebrew *erek appim*) means literally *long of anger*, or yet more literally *long of nostrils*; because when a man breathes quickly it is seen in his nostrils. The nostrils of a passion-

ate man are inflated; but a patient man breathes calmly, and no such physical excitement appears in him.

Here comes out the great contrast between our God and our fellow-men: they may be merciful towards us when we have committed one or two offences; but our God bears long with us—he is long in breathing—long-suffering. How patiently did he bear with the old world, giving them a hundred and twenty years' warning; but they would not hear. Patiently too did he bear with the children of Israel both in Egypt, in the Wilderness, and in the Land of Promise. What a character of long-suffering is given to our God at the close of the 106th Psalm, where his dealings with the children of Israel and their dealings with him are thus affectingly summed up:—"Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." In fact, we may adopt this pathetic picture as a representation of God's dealings

with the entire race of mankind, whom he seeks by his goodness to bring to repentance.

When we look back also upon our own past lives, and contemplate the careers of selfishness and sin which we led for many years, we wonder at that patience of God which has borne with us, and may be bearing with us still, or which happily resulted in the conversion of our souls, so that we can now say with the Apostle Peter, "The long-suffering of God is salvation." When we look all around us also on the intemperance, the impurity, the dishonesty, the violence and strife which exist on every hand, we may well be filled with surprise at the long-suffering of God. A good man once said, "If any of us occupied the throne of the world, we could not allow it to exist for a week. We could not allow such things to be said about us, and such a rebellion to be set up against us, as God has permitted for millenniums to be said about him, and to be set up against him." Yet it is of the Lord's long-suffering mercy that we are not consumed. Oh may his long-suffering lead us all to repentance and salvation; for "the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

But we are to suppose ourselves still standing within the cave of Sinai, and listening to the self-revealing voice of God. What is it he says next about himself. He declares that he is "abundant in goodness and truth." As the word here rendered "goodness" is the same that is translated "mercy" in the very next clause, we may insert it here also, and all the more readily that this part of the oracle is all occupied with the long-suffering mercy of God. We thus find that he is not only merciful, but *abundant in mercy*. As the sun abounds in light and heat, and the ocean in waters, of which they contain inexhaustible supplies, so does the infinite heart of God abound in mercy,

"Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

It abounds in truth also, so that, if he had ever made any gracious promise, we may be certain that he will keep it, and, we must likewise add, if he had ever issued a threatening against sin, he will abide by it too.

But the Divine voice continues. The Lord is not weary of opening up to us the exceeding great riches of his tender mercy and loving

kindness. Let us within the cave, still listen, and be filled with joy: "Keeping mercy for thousands." He not only has mercy, and abounds in it; but he keeps it as a vineyard is kept—yea, he watches it and guards it as men watch from a watch-tower (Hebrew, *natzar*). Let us not be afraid lest the mercy in which we hope may possibly be lost, as the money that is deposited in the bank is sometimes lost; for Omnipotence guards it, and guards it for thousands, even for the teeming myriads of mankind—not for one generation of men only, but even for thousands of generations. Indeed, when we compare this passage with the reason that is attached to the second commandment (Ex. 20:5, 6), it would appear that there is a contrast in both places between the three or four generations during which sin is punished here, and the thousands of generations throughout which mercy is made manifest. It will be observed that there is no word answering to "generation" in either passage in the Hebrew. There we have simply "threes," "fours," "thousands." No wonder, then, that in this nineteenth century of the Christian era, the full and free mercy of God still extends to us, when he himself declared at the mouth of Sinai's shaded cavern,

that he watched, guarded, and preserved mercy for thousands of generations! Behold how gracious is our God! What a character he has! Well may the nations of the earth put their trust in him!

But the Lord still speaks. Have we not heard enough? No. The climax of mercy is yet to be reached. Listen: "Forgiving iniquity transgression, and sin!" He piles up all conceivable kinds of disobedience, and declares that he is ready to take them all away—"iniquity, transgression, and sin." We are not to seek too narrowly to distinguish between these varied aspects of evil; for the redundancy is intentional on the part of the Divine speaker. Yet the slight radical diversities of meaning are calculated to humble us, and for that reason to be beneficial, if for no other. The first rendered sin (*avon*) means literally anything perverse or crooked; the second (*pesha*) has the signification of breaking and breaking through; while the third (*hattaah*) might be rendered "a missing of the mark." So that although we may have had lives most crooked and perverse in their windings and wanderings; although we may have broken away from all restraints, domestic, legal, and ecclesiastical, and may have alto-

gether missed the mark in life, in so far as holiness and happiness are concerned—our entire course having been one long mistake and one long sin, this wonderful Lord God Almighty, who is the Maker and Monarch of the Universe, but is also our Father, stands ready to blot all our transgressions away. Well may we say reverently and gladly as we bow with Moses at the mouth of the cave, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18, 19).

CHAPTER XV.

"CLEARING HE WILL NOT CLEAR."


BUT we must not proceed too quickly. The grand utterance of God, as his "similitude" passes the mouth of the cave, is not yet concluded. What words, however, are these that at length fall upon our astonished ears—

astonished now by the voice of judgment which seems to neutralise the voice of mercy that surprised us before? for as we listen we hear this declaration, "And that will by no means clear the guilty!" Have we heard correctly? Are these really the very words that were uttered by Jehovah, the Mighty One? And if so, do they not seem to contradict completely what he had said before? Has not all his gracious revelation been about clearing the guilty? And yet he here declares that "he will by no means clear the guilty!"

Some critics, not liking the apparent harshness of the doctrine of the justice of God, and especially fancying that here it clashed with the exuberance of the Divine mercy, have sought refuge in an amended translation; but Gesenius, the great Hebraist, speaks quite unhesitatingly on the point, and avers the proper rendering to be, "but will by no means always leave unpunished" (*venakkeh lo yenakkeh*, or, "but clearing he will not clear"). He quotes two parallel passages in which the same contrasted representations are found—namely, Num. 14:18 and Nah. 1:3. The former is just the repetition of this declaration by Moses when pleading with the Lord after the people had sinned on hearing the report of the spies.

In Nahum, however, we have the same contrast between mercy and judgment adduced in totally different circumstances, and with such surroundings that no doubt is left as to the sterner lesson which the Almighty meant to teach, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and *will not at all acquit* the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

There are certain circumstances, then, in which the Lord will not acquit. When men repent of their sins, and turn to him with full purpose of heart, they shall be acquitted on the ground of that great sacrifice which was prefigured by all the sacrifices which were appointed at this same memorable Sinai; but when men love sin and refuse to give it up, and roll it as a sweet morsel under the tongue, assuredly the Lord will not clear them. That this is the true meaning of the passage appears from the more fully contrasted statement which is attached to the second commandment of the Decalogue, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation *of them that hate me*; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."



Now these are the very words with which the Lord is about to close his grand declaration of his own moral character. Let us still listen, awe-struck, at the mouth of the cave, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." Yes, yes; he means clearly that he will have mercy upon those who turn to him and love him, but that he will also by no means pardon and acquit those who refuse to love him—who hate him—and persist in their refusal; and that besides punishing the parents themselves for their own sins, he will even visit in his providence the punishment of their sins in a mitigated form upon their children to the third and fourth generation. Let not such an entail of suffering be deemed inconsistent with the justice and the mercy of God. The penalty is attached as a warning to sin, that parents, who naturally love their children, may beware. Nor is the penalty to be regarded as always arbitrary and direct. Natural and social laws so work that the children cannot but suffer for the sins of their parents. A father's intemperance and vice, even although he may have turned from it, may have already imparted such a taint and hereditary fault to the con-

stitution of his children that the third or fourth generation may feel the pernicious effects. The loss of rank, or expatriation, through a parent's crime, may, in like manner, breed bitter fruits to children's children for a century or more. But by calling attention to such consequences of sin, the Lord God wished Moses and all mankind to recollect that he was severe, as well as merciful and gracious.

Thus we find in the Old Testament what we have already found in the New—namely, that there are two sides to the shield in the ever-blessed character of God—the two being necessary to its symmetry and completeness: his mercy on the one hand, and his justice on the other. “Our God is love,” and “Our God is a consuming fire,” make up the double, yet harmonising inscription which we find written on Mount Sinai, Mount Calvary, the great white throne, and the awards of the world to come; and, because it is so, let all the penitent hope, and all the impenitent tremble.

At the close of this discussion on the mercy and long-suffering of God, we beg to append one or two doctrinal corollaries, intended to cast light on debated theological points.

1. If God be so merciful and gracious—yea, so abundant in mercy and truth, even keep-

ing mercy for thousands of generations, and ready to blot out all kinds of iniquity, transgression, and sin, it cannot be true that there are multitudes of individuals in the world for whom Christ never shed his blood, and for whom no mercy has been provided at all. Evidently the only barrier that rises between any man and mercy is his own impenitence and unwillingness to have it—in other words, his own unfitness for the possession.

2. Mount Sinai clearly foreshadowed the atonement on Calvary. The Lord abounds in mercy; yet he will by no means clear you. Yon Victim bled that he might be able honourably to acquit—or, as we had it in a previous chapter, that "he might be just, and *yet* the justifier of him who believeth," as Whitby puts it (Commentary on Romans 3:26).

3. Some have argued that, because God visits the sins of the parents on the children to the third and fourth generation, there is no harm in saying that on account of Adam's sin moral agents are visited with helpless and hopeless inability to keep the commandments of God, and little children even adjudged to the pains of hell for ever. But let it be observed that the sufferings threatened on posterity for the sins of parents are temporal

judgments, and in no case spiritual, unless the descendants have voluntarily and culpably imitated their ancestors' transgressions. In so far as consequences involving actual sinfulness in the progeny are concerned, let the word of God through Ezekiel explain his own oracle, as uttered in the hearing of Moses—"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. . . . The soul that sinneth it shall die. . . . The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son" (Ezek. 18:2, 4, 20).

4. God's judgments in this world predict his judgments in the world to come. This is the argument which, as I have already had occasion to hint, Bishop Butler pursues in his "Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion." He reasons to this effect, that if the habits of youth entail upon men suffering all their days, and on their children after them, it should not be thought strange that sin persisted in to the last should entail upon the sinner suffering in the world to come. We are thus led to face the question of Future Punishment, which some have thought to be

inconsistent with the mercy of God. Let it be observed, however, that the doctrine cannot be said to conflict with the mercy of God, as it is revealed in his Word; for we have just found that the very oracle which proclaimed Jehovah to be merciful and gracious, took care to add that he would by no means clear the persistent sinner. I am aware that great and reverent minds, like that of the late John Foster, have not been able to bear the idea of everlasting punishment, which they have supposed to be incompatible with the mercifulness of God. But from Foster's own account of his mental exercise on the subject, it would appear that it was an erroneous notion of man's depravity that led him to doubt everlasting punishment. He asks earnestly, how we can suppose it to be consistent with the justice and mercy of God that a being who was born with a corrupt nature, and could do nothing but sin, should be punished for ever for what he could not help? So put, the difficulty is insurmountable; but if the premises laid down in this book, and, indeed, in this series of books, be admitted—namely, that man's will is free, and that the sinner is blameworthy to the last; and that the Lord is compelled to resort to everlasting punishment, because a

certain class of men insist upon everlasting transgression—the difficulties that surround the tenet are largely removed. For ourselves, we reverently bow before that revelation, which declares the punishment of the wicked to be as protracted as the life of the righteous (Matt. 25:46). We admit that the subject is solemn; but we fully expect that, in the light of the next world, we will be able to understand it better than we can be expected to do now. This is one of Butler's favourite ways of answering the objections of his adversaries—namely, that we can know so little here, but in another world we shall know as we are known. Perhaps we shall find out there, that the Lord's punishment of obstinate transgressors is one of the foundations on which his moral empire is most impregvably based, and by which it is most securely buttressed. It may be also, as my distinguished namesake has lately put it, that the existence of the everlastingly punished will turn out after all, although eternal loss, to be “a useful and tolerable existence.” At any rate, this doctrine of future punishment, I repeat, no more militates against the righteous mercifulness of God, than do Queen Victoria's prisons derogate from her character of clemency and graciousness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

LET us recall all that we have now found our God to be. We have found that he exists—that he is love—that he is love to all—that he is just—that his love is revealed to us in strict accordance with his justice—that he is merciful, and yet that his mercy does not keep him from visiting with his judgments those who are obstinately wedded to sin. Have we then, in illustrating these particulars, brought before the minds of our readers all the principal points in the character of God? Would there not be a serious deficiency in our exhibition of it if we left out that attribute which has been noted at the head of this chapter? Certainly we would when we consider both what is necessary to make up a complete moral character, and the Scriptural representations of the character of God.

Suppose that we knew a man who was kind, and just, and merciful, would it not be an additional element in the list of his good qualities if we should be able to say that, besides all these, he was spotlessly pure,

and, moreover, so enamoured of purity that it had become a ruling passion of his life. Now this is the additional attribute of the Deity on which we are to expatiate in this chapter.

Plutarch said he would rather that men declared he had no existence than that he was a debauched fellow; and in like manner we hesitate not to aver that the denial of God's holiness is, in our view, a greater sin than the denial of his Being. But, in truth, Paganism comes far short of our most holy religion in this respect; for while it deified Bacchus for his supposed gift of wine, Esculapius as the healer of disease, and Vulcan for his work in fire, it had no God of virtue, of holiness.

I frankly admit that the attributes of Justice, or Righteousness and Holiness, are closely connected with one another, and that in laying down the foundation of morals, we express what are the root ideas of the one as well as of the other. But just as we have seen that Mercy is so special a manifestation of Love that it deserved separate consideration, so is Holiness so important a development or adjunct of Righteousness that we are warranted to place it under a separate heading in this practical treatise. In fact, the distinct

words which are used, both in the Old Testament and the New, to designate these two views of the character of God show that we are justified in according them distinct consideration. In the Hebrew original of the Old Testament, *Kathosh*, translated "holy," as applied to the Deity, has quite a different radical signification from *Tsadik*, "righteous"—the root meaning of the former being that which is bright and shining like something new, and therefore pure; while the latter means literally that which is straight as opposed to that which is crooked—a straight path, for example, being the opposite of a crooked path.

The very same difference obtains in the New Testament between the Greek word for holy, namely, *hagios*, and the word for righteous, namely, *dikaïos*. The Divine Spirit conveys two distinct ideas to our minds when he tells us, that Christ of God is made unto us "sanctification" as well as "righteousness."

We might even infer the holiness of God from the works of nature; for if these teach us first his power and secondly his wisdom, their beauty, order, and harmony do at least suggest to us likewise the idea of his holiness. But not to insist on this, a very fair argu-

ment in favour of the holiness of God may be based upon the constitution of man and the moral progress of the world, or rather that war which is continually being waged between sin and holiness in this rebel corner of God's moral empire, and in which the victory is ever being given to purity as contrasted with impurity, to goodness as contrasted with badness. Evidently there is, to quote, but improve upon the well-known saying of one of our modern *savants* already referred to, not only *a something*, but a great invisible Some One, "tending to" holiness as well as to righteousness, and causing holiness among men evermore to win the day. It always turns out that the pure man in the long-run gets the better of the impure man — that his influence and character are the most potent in worldly affairs. If, then, God's providence be ever on the side of holiness, God himself must be a Holy Being.

But let us hear what God's own book tells us concerning the holiness of God. From beginning to end he appears in that volume to be of purer eyes than that he can look on sin. "Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" sang Moses and the Children of Israel after their deliver-

ance at the Red Sea. His servants are commanded to worship before him "in the beauty of holiness," since no other worship is suitable to the holy God—his favourite name throughout the Old Testament is "The Holy One of Israel"; while in the New Testament the distinguishing appellation of the third person in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. We get two glimpses into heaven, the one in Isaiah and the other in the book of Revelation, by which we are permitted to know how high a place this attribute of holiness, as belonging to the Deity, holds in the estimate of the heavenly inhabitants. "In the year that King Uzziah died," says Isaiah, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." "Where do we read of their crying out, Eternal, Eternal, Eternal, or Faithful, Faithful, Faithful, Lord God of hosts?" (Charnock.)

Thus it appears that these burning ones when they bow before the Eternal Lord,

magnify this attribute of holiness more than any other attribute of the Divine Nature. In the utterance of the word holy three times, if there be a passing reference to the three persons in the Godhead, there is doubtless a primary reference to his unexampled and peerless purity as far transcending that of any creature, angelic or human. Thus Isaiah, good and holy man though he was, cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Although the holiness of God's children be identical in kind with the holiness of God himself, yet it so far comes short in degree from the burning intensity of the flame of the Divine holiness, taken in connection with the fact of their own past transgressions, that the very best of God's children, if they were allowed to get a view from earth of the Divine perfections, such as Isaiah was privileged to obtain, would, like him, be humbled in the dust and exclaim concerning their own impurity and that of their co-temporaries. Let us hear, also, what the four living creatures cried, whom John saw in vision in the opened heaven: "They had each of them six wings

about him ; and they were full of eyes within : and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy ! Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."


Let us now consider the light that is cast upon this attribute of the Divine character by God's dealings with the children of men ; for if it be in his heart it must come out in his deeds. See him, then, looking down on the newly-created pair and smiling, well-pleased. That is Holiness delighting in holiness—the Uncreated delighting in the holy works of his own hand. But see the frown that gathers on the Divine face when sin is committed ! That is Holiness frowning on unholiness and driving it away from the scene which it has polluted. Specially, however, notice that it was chiefly as a holy, yea a most holy God, that Jehovah arranged all the ceremonies and rites and ordinances of the typical Levitical economy. The American author of that interesting but valuable little work, entitled "The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," brings out with edifying clearness that the grand idea which Jehovah wished to impress upon that rude people in the wilderness was this, You are sinners, but I am *Hakkathosh* THE HOLY ONE. That was the reason

why so many lustrations and washings were appointed to them—why there was first the outer court and then the inner court, the Holy place and then the Most Holy place—why they could not come before him without their sacrifices and their offerings—why the priests could not approach without their own prescribed purifications being attended to—why the lamps were kept continually burning, and the tongs, and the snuffers, and the bowls so scrupulously clean—why the curtains of the tabernacle were to be of “fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet”—why the Mercy-seat was sprinkled with blood and the High Priest alone could gain access to it, and he only once a year. The reason, we repeat, was this, that he who sat between the cherubim was most holy, and they were impure and sinful in his sight. If such was the teaching of the whole Levitical economy, may we not expect equal prominence to be given to the holiness of God in the New Covenant or Dispensation introduced by him in whom all these types met, and who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? What, then, do we find when we study the character of Jesus and the attitude which he assumed towards men? Do we not see him shining

out in his entire pilgrimage on earth as the Sinless One? His was what Dr. Bushnell calls "the only sinless childhood and youth that ever were lived on earth." In full manhood he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He walked through the land of Judea, his pure spirit vexed and burdened and crushed with surrounding iniquity. And yet he could look the men of his own nation in the face who ungratefully refused him, and say, Which of you convinceth me of sin? It was this Jesus Christ the Righteous who offered himself without spot as a sacrifice unto God on our behalf—the Holy, holy, holy One, accepting this sinless second Adam as our representative, and issuing the proclamation that ever afterwards he would forgive sin for his sake. See, then, how clearly it comes out, that although there be forgiveness of sin through the sacrifice of Christ, there is no connivance at sin. The most holy God forgives it on the ground of a most holy offering, and when he forgives, calls the humbled believer to a life of holiness.

This is the last point on which we will now touch in this chapter—namely, the holy character, which is the outcome in man of the holiness of God, as it is specially revealed in the cross of Christ; for, as we have already said,

the worshipper becomes assimilated to the object of worship, and, like God, we are expected to be not only loving and just and merciful, but also holy. This, we may say, was the grand object which God had in view in the scheme of redemption—namely, to bring us back to the way of holiness. To gain this object Christ promised the Holy Spirit, besides putting into his gospel those principles of constraining love, which were calculated to bind the heart of man to his person in holy consecration. Therefore are we besought by him whom we may call the apostle of justification, not to forget to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices. Elsewhere he prays for a Christian Church, that “their whole body, soul, and spirit might be preserved blameless.” “This is the will of God,” he exclaims again, “even your sanctification.” And Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, quoting from the Old Testament, exclaims, “Be ye holy, saith the Lord, for I am holy.” As an old writer says, “We are not to set the spiritual clock of the heart by other clocks, but by the Sun of Righteousness.” And if it be the case that it was sin that broke the heart of yon dying Lamb of God, should we not feel ourselves called as believers in his



name to have nothing to do with sin, to abstain from the very appearance of evil, in a word, to be holy as God is holy. I am well aware that there have been many controversies on sanctification in the Christian Church—some maintaining the possibility and others the impossibility of a complete deliverance from sin in this life. As generally happens in all controversies, there has been not a little logomachy, or mere war of words, from not having terms sufficiently defined.

What Wesley and Fletcher and Finney have maintained, or meant to maintain, was just this: That in the renewed nature the aim of the heart is put right; and that whereas man once lived to himself, when regenerated or sanctified he lives to the glory of God. If ever they contended for a life of sinlessness, it was a life led, be it observed, not under the power of man's own efforts, but under the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Yet inasmuch as that Spirit in man dwells in a frail tabernacle, and on the condition of man's exercise of a free and therefore mutable will,—if ever these advocates of Christian perfection have maintained that even renewed man had lived for years in a state of absolute sinlessness, without one single deviation from the

line and the law of holiness, their charity in making such a statement has, we fear, exceeded their prudence. Still it remains true that regenerate man, upon the whole, is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and lives an upright and consecrated life.

Holiness and happiness, both in God and man, are indissolubly connected. When Paul speaks of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," the correct translation would be "the happy God." Inasmuch as the Lord ever walks up to the light of the Infinite Right, as it is revealed in his own infinite mind, he must exist in the continuous enjoyment of that unbounded happiness which is connected with doing the right and exercising holy love. And when we, in our limited spheres, do the right and live not for self, but for the good of universal being, all the happiness of holiness will flow into our hearts. Oh, if men but knew what happiness is to be found in this, in being like God and doing the will of God, they would not seek it in broken cisterns where it is not to be found! Rank says it is not in me; riches, honour, fame and friends say, neither is it in us. But when the man, digging for happiness, at length strikes upon the pure ore of the mine of holiness, that is

the termination of all his restless investigation; for he cries out, "*Eureka!*" Now, I have found it. Even ministers of the gospel, though they be good men, have made mistakes in this respect. They have fancied that they would be happier in wealthy communions allied to the State, or allied to the great; and therefore they have left the church of their first love and their early upbringing,—but only to be disappointed. For they have found at last that there is one law for the pulpit and the pew; that there is often far more happiness in the small congregation than in the large one—that a life of self-denial for Christ's sake is a life of happiness. They have often sighed to be back again among the godly and simple-hearted people, whose prayers and whose piety so remarkably supported and seconded all their pulpit labours.

A contented mind is a continual feast. "Great peace have they that love thy law, nothing shall offend them." To his persecuted followers Christ said, "Your joy no man taketh from you."

Hence even kings upon the throne, in quest of happiness, have become Christ's little children. When the Czar of all the Russias, in 1814, was marching from Moscow to Paris

in triumph, banners waving, processions marching, landgraves and margraves bowing obsequiously before him, his happiness did not spring from these external sources. He sent for Stilling at Carlsruhe and said to him, "Tell me, dear sir, tell me wherein true holiness consists." The German author replied, "In my opinion, Sire, it consists in these three things—In surrendering everything to the Lord; in always remembering that the eye of God is on us; and in keeping up continual heart-communion with the Lord." When these words were uttered, Alexander I. took hold of the speaker's hands and exclaimed, "Dear sir, that is my very experience!" Thus, though a great King, this Emperor knew that true happiness came from holy communion with a holy God.

I shall now close by merely mentioning one or two theological inferences which I think to be fairly deducible from the doctrine of the holiness of God.

(1). If he be of purer eyes than that he can look upon sin, it must be awful blasphemy to say that he has, by his own will and act, predestinated it, and brought it to pass.

(2). The Holiness of God, as well as the Justice and Love of God, erected the Cross of

Calvary. Holiness needed to be magnified as well as justice. The sacrifice of Calvary has not only the superscription in the eyes of the moral universe, "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us," but this one, "Sin is exceeding sinful."

(3). It is plain that conversion means the giving up of the whole heart to a holy God. The essence of the fall was the withdrawal of the heart from God; and the essence of Paradise regained is the new supremacy of the old and rightful King.

(4). Evidently a great battle is going on in the world between a holy God and some subordinate evil power. But eventually that evil power shall be crushed and the holy God shall be all in all.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

THE attribute of the Divine wisdom is so closely allied to the omniscience, or all-comprehending knowledge of the Deity, that unless we carefully define our terms we run the risk of including in our list an attribute

which may be regarded as a physical rather than a moral one. We can all understand the difference between knowledge and wisdom, as displayed, for example, by one of our fellow-creatures.

A man may know a great deal and may nevertheless not be very wise. Wherever we go, we hear mention made of individuals who are full of information, classical, scientific, or philosophical, or all three together, but who, notwithstanding, are neither clever, on the one hand, in the sense of being ingenious, or prudent, on the other hand, in the sense of shaping their own conduct wisely. This fact is well-expressed in the quaint proverb, "The greatest clerks are not the wisest men." And a man may be said to be wise, or skilful, or cunning, to use the old sense of that word, as a mechanic or a contriver and discoverer of new inventions, or he may be called wise in the yet higher sense of moral conduct.

Thus we have three ideas distinctly before our minds as three possibilities daily exemplified among our fellowmen—(1) A man may be a complete dunce of learning, and thus may only have knowledge, if he has not also (2) ingenuity or cleverness, or (3) wisdom manifested in prudent moral conduct. Now I

need hardly notice that all the three are possessed to an infinite extent by the infinitely wise God. He possesses, in the first place, that all-perfect knowledge which is the basis of his wisdom—for it is self-evident that, whether in God or man, wisdom must have knowledge to rest upon. Then, in the next place, the Deity is infinitely wise in the sense of being infinitely ingenious, as the works of his vast universe do testify; while, thirdly, he is infinitely prudent in all his acts of administration, and in all his conduct as the Moral Governor of the universe. Of course in an infinitely holy God these two departments of wisdom are intimately interblended, in as much as in all his skilful contrivances he ever has his own glory and the good of his creatures in view.

We will therefore, after having made this introductory explanation, use the word "wisdom" throughout the rest of this chapter, indifferently of the Divine skill and the Divine prudence.

As in preceding sections, I will here show that God is wise—first, from the works of creation; secondly, from his Word—that is, from the existence of the Holy Scriptures themselves, as well as from special statements

in these Scriptures; and thirdly, from the revelation of his character in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is repeatedly called, both in the Old Testament and the New, "The Wisdom of God."

I have already, to some extent, anticipated the illustration of the first of these points in the beginning of this volume, where I endeavoured to adduce proofs of the existence of God from the marks of design, which are visible in the works of creation. Let me here bring forward one or two more of these evidences of God's wisdom that I may profitably and edifyingly fill up this outline. Let me, for the sake of variety, detail a few of the rarer and more recondite proofs of God's wisdom. Think of the carpet of green with which the earth is clothed—a colour, as one philosopher remarks, "so eminently refreshing and delightful to the eye." Think, also, how the plants of the earth produce yearly a multitude of seeds by which they are maintained throughout revolving centuries upon the face of the earth.

Let it be remembered, also, that the great law of gravitation not only binds the stars and planets together in their orbits, but enables us in our little spheres to live, and

move, and have our being; for we could not keep our places on this terrestrial ball were it not for the operation of this mighty law. The variety also observable in nature evidences the wisdom of God. No two landscapes are exactly alike. No two human beings, in face, feature, and gait, are exactly alike. The same diversity is apparent even in the handwriting of man; for no two handwritings are exactly alike. How valuable such diversity must be will appear from the reflection that without it the strangest confusions would arise. We would have difficulty in identifying our own relations, and even judge and criminal might be made to change places and no remedy for the injustice be at hand. Nor need I add that the diversity in handwriting just referred to is frequently of the highest advantage, as every day the peculiarity of a man's autograph protects him from injury in many directions.

I hasten, however, from a branch of the subject which is manifestly capable of wide illustration, to notice, in the second place, the testimonies of God's wisdom that are to be found in Holy Scripture; and here it may be profitably remarked, that the Bible, as a whole, is one great witness to the wisdom of God.

If we may legitimately prove the wisdom of Newton by his "Principia," of Bacon by his "Novum Organum," and of Seneca and of Epictetus by their moral maxims, much more may we demonstrate the wisdom of God from the contents of that wonderful book to which all the other books in the world do reverence.

What authoritative statements as to matters which only God could know—what wondrous foretelling of future events—what grandeur and sublimity of style united to unequalled simplicity and pathos—what a revelation of mercy strangely adapted to carry the heart captive and bind it in love to God! Surely the author of such a volume must needs be infinitely wise. Of the express ascriptions of wisdom to God contained in the Bible itself, let the following suffice as instances:—"With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle" (Job 12:16-18). "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Rom. 16:27). "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17). "To the

only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 25).

Pliny used to say concerning a very ingenious individual, "How many Catos are centred in him!"—but the greatest finite intellect is a mere taper when compared with the Infinite Jehovah. Well worthy is he, besides, of the name *the only wise God*, not only because his wisdom is infinite, but also because he is the Creator and Sustainer of all finite intelligences, angelic, human, and by whatever other name they may be called. Let us join in the doxology of the universe and cry—Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, the only wise God!

I now proceed with pleasure to observe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is the crowning manifestation of the wisdom of God. Writing to the Corinthians Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and immediately afterwards he declares that this great doctrine is "the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7). In the same connection he calls the Saviour "Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God,"

and ironically remarks, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).


This name, "the wisdom of God," as applied to Jesus Christ's work, is justified by two important considerations, the first of which is this, that he is really in himself *the wisdom of God*. As the second person in the Godhead, he partook from eternity of the essential wisdom of the Deity. I have no doubt that although there may be in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs a reference to wisdom as an attribute of God, we cannot properly interpret the passage and leave Christ out altogether. In fact, it seems to be much more natural to apply the glowing paragraphs to that Word by whom all things were made than to a mere attribute poetically personified: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not

made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:22-31). If, then, the Lord Jesus was this very wisdom which had ever been with the Father, there is no wonder that when he came into the world to be the world's Saviour he was called the Wisdom of God.

But, further, he deserves this name, because the cross of Calvary is the grandest manifestation, not only, as we have seen, of God's love and justice and mercy and holiness, but also of his wisdom. We may apply to it another utterance in that eighth of Proverbs, from which we have already quoted, "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." Of a truth, the Christian

atonement is the "wittiest invention" that ever was devised and made known. The Sovereign taking the rebel's place; the Creator humbling himself to lift up the creature; the innocent standing in the place of the guilty, and thus upholding the law by a display of unprecedented love, and winning by self-sacrifice the alien over to willing obedience—the world never heard the like of it. There is no wisdom like unto this wisdom; it is the very wisdom of God. Tell me not in the same breath of the discoveries of chemistry, the flights of poetry, or the subtle distinctions of dialecticians; for the world's rarest and richest wisdom must pale its lustre before the grand and gladdening wisdom of God. Solomon's wisdom was praised because he found out by the threatening of death to which of two mothers a living child belonged; but how much greater the Divine wisdom which was displayed in the death of the cross, when the sword awoke against the Shepherd and falling on him brought thereby life to the dying and the dead.

I must now, lastly, notice the reception of this wisdom on the part of man; for man is not only made loving and just and holy, but also wise with the wisdom of his God.



"Wisdom," said Jesus, "is justified of her children." They partake of her heavenly prudence, and willingly listen to her daily instructions; and even as a pupil amongst us brings credit to his teacher, so do wisdom's children bring her honour. "Christ of God," said Paul to the Corinthians, "is made unto us wisdom," as well as righteousness and sanctification; because (1) the knowledge of Christ himself is the greatest wisdom. It excels all the lore of the schools. "It is eternal life to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." The humble cottager, with her pillow and bobbins, weaving at the door eclipsed, according to Cowper's touching lines, the brilliant Voltaire; because she knew the gospel which he was too proud to receive. Then (2) the reception of Christ into the heart imparts to the believer a practical wisdom that is truly surprising. Let a man be really a foolish man and of little wit, either in social or commercial affairs, and it is astonishing how, after coming to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, he will obtain, not only a spirit of wisdom enabling him to behave piously, but even prudently and sagaciously as to the ordinary affairs of life. The world often wonders at this, and fails to solve the

riddle; but the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. "They have the unction of the Holy One and know all things." Christ is made unto them wisdom. It was for such wisdom as this that Solomon prayed in his youth, and received it from the Lord. This is the practical wisdom concerning which Job puts the question—"Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?"—and after a series of truly sublime declarations as to where it cannot be found, he ends his quest by replying, "Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

This is the wisdom of which James tells us that if any man lack it he will obtain it, "if he ask in faith, nothing wavering"; and again he tells us, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

And yet, alas! multitudes refuse to admit this heavenly wisdom into their hearts. They still cry, "Away with it, away with it!" "Crucify it, crucify it!" There is a beautiful parable in the book of Ecclesiastes which always strikes my mind with peculiar pathos

when I apply it to the treatment which Jesus receives at the hands of men : " There was a little city, and few men within it ; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city ; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength : nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard " (Eccles. 9 : 14-16). The object of this parable is to show that wisdom is greater than strength, but that nevertheless this wisdom is often slighted and forgotten. And if the principle of the allegory may be illustrated by the neglect with which men of genius, such as poets, engineers, and others have often been visited, is it not touchingly true of the despite that is done to the Saviour of the world ? For when the great Apollyon had besieged the city of Man's soul, and had built against it the bulwarks both of temptation and the retribution of sin, there was a poor wise man, dressed in " a coat woven without seam throughout," who delivered the city by giving up his own life for it ; and yet what multitudes fail to remember that same poor man ! Archimedes, Socrates, Columbus,

Galileo, Harvey, Watt, and Stephenson—the world's benefactors, despised and laughed at by their contemporaries before their worth was known—these pictures are not half so sad or tragic as that of the Divine Immanuel, despised and rejected of man. O ye who live in "the little city" of this tiny planet, which he rescued by his wit and self-sacrifice, rise up and demand that a world's monument of gratitude be built in honour of this "poor wise man." Let us not neglect him any longer, but love him who first loved us, and died for us on the tree.

I close by a few theological inferences deducible from the doctrine of the wisdom of God.

1. The foreknowledge of God is necessarily included in his omniscience and wisdom; for if there be anything in the future which God does not know, then his omniscience and concomitant wisdom would not be complete. I need not repeat, however, for the thousandth time, that the omniscience of God does not interfere with the responsibility of man. I am quite warranted to say to a sinner, If you had acted differently, God would have fore-known differently.

2. When we join the foreknowledge to the longsuffering of God, an attribute on which

we have already dwelt, we can see how the Divine wisdom can over-rule even the evil deeds of obstinately wicked men to the good of the world, and the advancement of his church. He *bears long* with the Pharaohs and Nebuchadnezzars and Judases of the earth, wicked though they be; because he foresees how the higher they are raised up on the height of their brazen effrontery, the greater will be the good done by their signal overthrow. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" But it will be once more noticed that there is a great contrast between the rigid predestination of sin and providence over-ruling it for wise and beneficent ends.

3. Let us adore the wisdom of God as it is displayed in the cross of Calvary—

"Here his whole name appears complete;
Nor wit can guess, nor reason prove,
Which of the letters best is writ,
The power, the wisdom, or the love."

Statesmen who have passed Reform Bills, or Anti-Slavery Bills, or Anti-Monopoly Bills of any description are proud to think that their names shall be associated with these triumphs after they are dead and gone; but O what a stroke of policy in that darling

scheme of the Deity, the salvation of apostate man by the Incarnation and Death of the Only-Begotten! What lustre it reflects upon his character! What undying honour upon his name! Strike your golden harps, O ye angels; and ye saved sinners sing on a yet louder key; for ye are the objects of his compassion—for you has this marvellous wonder been displayed. Let us all cry—"Glory, glory to the only wise God!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRUTH OF GOD.

AT the commencement of this chapter, also, it will be necessary for us to define our terms; for the expressions, "the true God" and "the truth of God," are capable of being understood in diverse acceptations.

Thus, when it is said that "it is eternal life to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent" (John 17:2), and again, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9), reference is had not to the moral character of Jehovah, but to the reality of his existence as opposed

to the nonentities whom Pagans worshipped, and whom they called "gods." When, however, the martyrs cry in the book of Revelation, "How long, O Lord, holy and true!" and again when the heavenly conquerors in general exclaim, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" (Rev. 6:10 and 15:3), that very attribute of Veracity and Faithfulness is extolled, to which I propose now to call attention.

In the ascription also to the Lord of "mercy and truth," which occurs so frequently in the Old Testament, this same attribute of truthfulness or faithfulness is celebrated—particularly in this sense, that the gracious promises which Mercy has uttered Truth honourably and literally fulfils; but as to that other sense in which Christ and his gospel are called in the New Testament *par excellence* "The Truth," I shall have something to say before this chapter is ended.

1. I remark, briefly, that we learn the truthfulness or veracity of God from his works of Creation and Providence. We cannot, indeed, insist much on this particular; because, strictly speaking, veracity or faithfulness must needs be a matter of distinct revelation. It is only, therefore, from the Scriptures, containing as

they do God's own statements, that we can learn articulately and distinctly that he is infinitely true and truthful. But although we cannot see the Divine faithfulness inscribed on his works as clearly as his wisdom and love, we may infer it most warrantably and legitimately. The regularity and order of the universe seem to teach not only that God is great and kind, but also that he is true. We expect the sun to rise in the morning, and it always rises. The farmer sows his seed, looking for a harvest, and it always comes, of one kind or another. The astronomer can predict eclipses of the sun and moon; and why is he so certain that his predictions will be verified? Because the loving God is the true God, not only as to the reality of his existence, but the truthfulness of his promises. He does not raise expectations which afterwards he fails to justify.

2. I might here also prove the veracity or faithfulness of God from the nature of the case. Reason comes to our aid with her *a priori* assurances. God has put into our hearts a most decided detestation of falsehood. Not only is an untruthful man an injurious member of society, but he is despised. Even his fellow-knaves despise him, as they despise

themselves. His neighbours may laugh at his clever tricks and deep schemes of imposture, but they would not trust him or make him a friend. In their inner heart they look down upon him. Now, if God has placed that unerring and universal instinct in our breasts, the deduction is fair and irrefragable that he himself must be infinitely true and truthful. Can he have given us a better helm for steering the ship of our finite activity than he possesses himself for the guidance of his own Infinite ways? God forbid! As he is all-perfect, and since truthfulness is necessarily one of the elements of an all-perfect character, he must be true and truthful. "Let God be true and every man a liar."

3. I advance now to notice the testimonies which are to be found in the Bible to the truthfulness of God. On the threshold of this part of the subject, however, we are met with the objection, "How can One whose character is the very question under consideration be allowed to testify concerning his own veracity? And, besides, may not egotism, and therefore imperfection, be charged against him who asserts his own excellence?" Not in the case of the Infinite One when he is graciously pleased to reveal his own blessed

character to us his finite and dependent children. A rich benefactor may be excused for saying to the surprised object of his bountiful regard, to whom he has just made a promise of substantial help, "You may trust me. You need not fear lest I should break my word. I am truthful. I always keep the promises I make." No culpable egotism would be chargeable against such a statement. Benevolence, not selfishness, would characterise it; in as much as it was made for the benefit—that is, for the encouragement, of some timid recipient of relief. Now, if such a line of argument would be lawful in the case of a fellow-creature, how much more applicable is it to the Creator who, that we poor finite dependent creatures may be induced to trust him, testifies concerning his own truthfulness.

In addition to the passages of Scripture already quoted, I may adduce the following: 'And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant' (2 Sam. 7:28); "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9); "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Ps. 31:5); "His truth endureth to all generations" (Ps. 117:2); "But as God is true, our

word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Cor. 1:18), etc., etc.

The history, however, of God's dealings with his church and the race of man as a whole, proves his truthfulness yet more satisfactorily than mere isolated texts of Scripture. Whatever he has either promised or threatened from the creation of man downwards he has graciously and truthfully fulfilled. As he had announced to Abraham, the Children of Israel were subjected to bondage in Egypt, but afterwards were brought out and gained the possession of the land of Canaan. In like manner the Babylonish captivity was brought about as predicted, and the return from it too. But especially was the truthfulness of God signally displayed in the incarnation and death of the Messiah. The lyre of poet and oracle of prophet all announced it beforehand, and seemed to be burdened with the weighty announcement; but in the fulness of time all was fulfilled, and the Holy Ghost also was subsequently poured out in terms of the Messiah's own prediction. Yes, again and again do we read that the truthful God "remembered his covenant." He assures us repeatedly that it would be as faithfully kept as the ordinances of nature: "If my covenant

be not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant" (Jer. 33 : 25, 26); and when at length the appointed time had come, and the great promise was to be kept in the birth of Christ, the ecstatic Zecharias declared that the truthful Jehovah had visited them "to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant."

Although the whole of the predictions to be found in the Old Testament concerning the propagation of the gospel and the universal spread of the kingdom of Christ have not yet been fulfilled, enough has been accomplished to show us that, in this respect also, the promises of God shall be kept, and the Saviour yet obtain the whole round world for his inheritance.

It is worthy of remark that in the New Testament one particular truth is selected out of all possibly true propositions, and is dignified with the name of "THE TRUTH." A stranger, not knowing that the blessed doctrine of redemption is the cream of divine revelation, and who might also be unacquainted with the contextual connection of the passages themselves, might wonder at such remarkable statements as the following: "Ye shall know

the truth, and *the truth* shall make you free;" "Sanctify them through *thy truth*;" "Who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of *the truth*." "What!" he might feel disposed to exclaim in wonder, "Is there really one particular truth, by believing which we are made free and saved and sanctified?" "Yes," the Christian teacher would be warranted to reply, "and by means of which souls are regenerated too; for we again read, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth,'—and elected also; for we likewise find it said, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.'" We can suppose a stranger to the gospel saying, "What may be this wonderful truth which works such wonders in the hands of the Spirit of God?" and we can suppose the Evangelist replying gladly, in the words of the New Testament itself, "It is 'the truth as it is in Jesus' (Eph. 4:21); for he said himself, 'I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me'" (John 14:6).

Why is the doctrine of the gospel distinguished by this name of peerless excellence, as if it alone of the multitudinous statements

which have truth in them, were in reality true? Not merely because, as some theologians say, Jesus was the anti-type and consummation of all the Old Testament types—he the substance, they the mere shadow; nor merely, as others allege, that he was the truth-speaking Instructor or Doctor who alone could tell the road to heaven. The grand reality, as it appears to me, was this, that the proposition, “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” is the greatest of all the propositions that ever were laid before the intelligence of man to be received, and is, moreover, that truth in which all other minor verities, historical and scientific, as well as theological, may be said to meet, culminate, and be glorified. And when we poor children of a day, the great cry of whose hearts is after the Infinite—“O that we might find him, and come even unto his seat”—who are not satisfied with all that we can be told about this world, its structure, its inhabitants, and the principal events which have transpired upon its surface, or even about the natural laws which govern the universe of which our world is a part, but who sigh after definite information about our Father and our Father’s House—who wonder wistfully whether or not there

shall be any other life than this in which the more difficult problems that perplex us shall be solved, and the aspirations of our hearts satisfied,—I say, when the Only-Begotten Son of God steps upon the surface of our planet, clothed with our flesh, saying, “I have come for the purpose of casting light upon your future, and of revealing to you the true character of your Father,” we willingly accord to the gospel which he brings the name of *the truth* pre-eminently, and to himself as its grand embodiment the name of **THE TRUTH**.

Another way of stating the same great verity is this: Jesus is that grand embodiment of truth which the true and truthful God saw to be the best possible revelation of his mind and will whereby alienated man might be brought back to love and holy obedience. If any one should ask me to state this grand gospel in a condensed propositional form, I would reply as follows: “*That notwithstanding man’s rebellion God still loves him, and through the shed blood of his dying Son sends him the forgiveness of his sin, and at the same time seeks to deposit in his heart, through the Holy Spirit, that responsive love which will issue in holiness of heart and life.*” This is just a fuller way of stating the grand

gospel of representative suffering which Paul taught, "For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Or again, "He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."

This is the truth which has wrought wonders in the world, ever since it was announced to man. Not only Constantine, but millions more have cried concerning the cross, "*In hoc vinco*"—*In this I conquer*. It has been all down the centuries "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It found Saul persecuting the church, and, in a year or two, he became, under its influence, the chief human fosterer and preserver of the church. It found the inhabitants of Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, and all the chief cities and towns of the old world fornicators, idolaters, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; indeed, chargeable with all manner of vileness and transgression, and it left them washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. It found Augustine living in "chambering and wantonness," and it sent him forth a new creature in Christ Jesus—a meet companion

for his pure mother Monica, and for the holiest saints of God. It found Luther the trembling inmate of a cell, and with it in his heart and hand he emptied cells by the hundred, and indeed shook the world. It found Wesley sighing after light; but whenever he learned from the Moravians to say with holy Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," this "truth as it is in Jesus" urged him with yet more than Moravian zeal to commend Christ to the world. It found Chalmers teaching mathematics at St. Andrews and preaching cold ethics to a few uninterested hearers at Kilmany, and it fired him with all the zeal of a modern Knox till he had filled Scotland with his holy fervour, and left the impress of his eloquence and zeal upon his entire generation. And what shall I more say? for there is not a pious soul in the world to-day that lives to God, nor one that dies to God with sanctified resignation, that has not found both peace and submissiveness of spirit from Jesus the Truth.

The intimate connection between this view of the gospel and the indispensable faith of the sinner will be apparent at a glance. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and how is it that faith is educed?

Men cannot believe a lie, but they find no difficulty in yielding credence to the truth—that is to say, when their prejudices, prepossessions, and mistakes do not stand in the way. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son” (1 John 5:9). Therefore an important department of the work of the Holy Spirit, whose distinguishing name is “THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH,” is to cause the blessed verity of the gospel to stand out before the recipient mind of man in all its transparent clearness and attractive trustworthiness.

Jesus, moreover, whose revelations (called “the things of Christ”) the Spirit applies to the heart of man, ever spoke the truth and nothing but the truth. As “very God of very God” this was only what might have been expected of him. All the declarations which he made from first to last concerning the Father’s love to man were strictly and literally correspondent with the facts of the case; since he is “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20), not only in the sense of being the real God, but the truth-speaking God.

If, then, we believe that Cæsar, Charlemagne, or Napoleon lived and died because man has

told us so ; how much more should we believe that Jesus lived and died for our salvation because God has told us so !

I now come to show concerning this attribute of truthfulness, as has already been made plain concerning the others, which have been particularised, that in it also the sincere worshipper comes to resemble the Being worshipped. Not only is the believer like his God in the sense of being loving, just, holy, and wise, but he is truthful, strictly truthful, also. At Pilate's bar Jesus said, " Every one that is of *the truth* heareth my voice " (John 13 : 37). This grand appellation may be understood to mean not only that his people thirst for the truth and believe it when they hear it, but that they habitually speak it, and that all their actions square with the requirements of veracity's straight and undeviating line. Hence the apostle writing to the Ephesians, who had professed to receive Christ, when exhorting them to lay off more and more the old man and put on the new, thus directs : " Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another " (Eph. 4 : 25). Lying abounded in the ancient world, and it lamentably abounds in our own day, and in Chris-

tianised countries too. How many merchants conceal the defects of the goods they vend, and assign to them a value which they do not possess! How many professing Christians instruct their servants to say that they are not at home when they are at home, or that they are indisposed when they really are in perfect health! Perhaps in so doing they shelter themselves under the ambiguity of the words "indisposed," flattering themselves with the soothing solace, that it may denote heart-unwillingness as well as bodily sickness; but he who shelters himself under such an ambiguity shelters himself *under a lie*. Brethren, it ought not so to be. He who says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," also says to us in the entire spirit of the Bible, and of his own spotless new creation, "Be ye true, for I am true." In fact, he almost says as much through his servant Paul when the latter protests, as already quoted, "But *as God is true*, our word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Cor. 1:18). Oh that Christian people, when about to speak, whether in the way of business or in private conversation—perhaps narrating some remarkable occurrence, or repeating the words of an absent individual—would ever say to themselves inwardly before opening the mouth,

"Let us speak only the truth, *as God is true.*" I heard a distinguished preacher once say that "He could hope well of a young man although he might be overtaken in a fit of passion or gave way to shortlived excess ; but if he found a young man, or any man, to be capable of *telling a deliberate falsehood*, he could believe him to be capable of any other villany, and could have little hope of his eternal salvation." O thou the True, as well as the Beautiful and the Good, give us, in never-failing supplies, of thine own essential trueness and truth !

I close by deducing from the Divine Attribute of Truthfulness one or two inferences which have a bearing on systematic theology.

1. This attribute condemns as unworthy of God the speculation of certain theologians that there are two Divine wills—a revealed and a secret one. According to the former, he is said to desire the salvation of all men ; while according to the latter he desires the salvation only of some. But there is a contradiction here, unworthy, we repeat, of the character of a God of truth.

2. This attribute condemns as unworthy the speculations of some divines as to man's complete and total inability to believe the gospel. What ! we say in surprise, after having gazed

for a little on the unsullied lustre of this divine perfection, Unable to believe God! A sane man, with all his faculties, unable to credit the statements of the infinitely truthful Jehovah! What a libel at once on the character of God, as well as on man the work of his hands! It is quite true, indeed, that man has fallen; but where the mind is sound, the fault must lie in the affections and the will, and not in the power of receiving evidence. If it should be replied, "Man is unwilling to receive the gospel in his natural state,"—to that proposition we unhesitatingly subscribe—and look for the remedy in the moral and persuasive influences of the Holy Spirit—not the mere power of the truth itself, but the real, inscrutable, yet resistible influences which accompany the truth.

3. We find out here what faith really is. It is *a receiving of the truth*. In fact, it is, as we have seen, coming to "the knowledge of the truth." A testimony is presented to the intelligence, and not to the emotions, for admission into the inner man. When the evidence is adequate, and when the attention of a man is really turned towards it with a measure of interest, the faith which results is properly an act of the satisfied intelligence.

Doubtless, as Dr. Chalmers says, "Moral antecedents go before and moral consequents come after; but faith, *quæ* faith, is purely an act of the intellect"—perceiving and gladly perceiving that what is said in the gospel concerning the love of the Son of God is all true, and true to me.

4. This attribute of the Deity is seen to be most important when we remember that all along the ages our God has been a covenant-making God. He virtually made a covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden, and Abraham on the uplands of Palestine, with Moses and the Children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, and with the whole race of man when he declared, "Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Grace and justice both shone forth in all these dispensations; but in Christ grace superabounds—yet not unrelieved by the severity of justice. It is required of a covenant-maker, as of a steward, that "he be found faithful"; and we have just seen that this attribute Jehovah has in an infinite degree. Not one jot or tittle of his promises or threatenings have failed, or shall fail. Over the entire domain of eschatology, or the revealed future of man in the next world, the arched inscrip-

tion reads thus: "The promises and menaces of God also are all yea and amen."


5. We see clearly here on what footing or basis unbelief shall be condemned at last. "Our God was the true God; and they who rejected the gospel, Adam-like and Eve-like, disbelieved him. They believed a deceiver, and "made him a liar." May not these words appropriately be spoken at last from the great white throne, "If I spake the truth, why did ye not believe?" And shall they not be left "speechless" who have resisted God?

6. But once more, if ye profess to have received *the truth*, see that ye be *true* in all your words and deeds—faithful transcripts of that grand practical epistle which was composed for our imitation between Bethlehem's manger and Calvary's tree.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DILIGENCE OF GOD.

THERE is still another attribute of God which serves to make his character yet more complete as an object of holy admiration, and also of faithful imitation in our respective spheres



—I refer to the diligence of God. Theologians do not generally refer to it in their treatises, but it strikes us that in so far these treatises are left deficient. A man may be loving and merciful and skilful and stainless in moral reputation; but if he be listless and shiftless—if he lack energy and leave precious time unimproved, and fail to take advantage of precious opportunities of usefulness, how serious the defect in his character! Now the old Epicurean's idea about the Deity represented him in a somewhat similar light. He had set the machinery of the world agoing, but left it thereafter very much to itself, taking little interest in mundane and human affairs, but dwelling 'apart in peaceful inactivity, enjoying the luxury of infinite ease with infinite dignity. It will be the object of this chapter to show that this representation of the Divine Being is a very unworthy one, and to hold him up as a pattern of unvarying and unfailing diligence to those who believe upon him.

Jesus said to the carping Pharisees who found fault with him for curing an impotent man on the Sabbath-day, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). I would make this noble and suggestive utterance the

basis of my observations. I will consider first the Father's diligence and next the diligence of the Son; the manifestation and representative of the Father.

God the Father works. To how sublime a contemplation do these words introduce us: the energy, the ubiquitous operations of God! Comparatively speaking, the Deity was enjoying, when Jesus so spake, a Sabbath—a rest from the busy labours of Creation's morn. Yet all through the long Sabbath that had elapsed since he had pronounced the work of his hands very good, he had still been working in the sustentation and preservation of this world—yea, of this universe. There was “necessity” and “mercy” in it too; for without the constant exercise of Divine power the entire fabric of creation would crumble into ruin. And the argument of the Saviour, which he brought to bear on the bigots who challenged his miracle of mercy was this—If my Father has been working during his long Sabbath, may I not be working too in labours of love throughout the hours of the little Sabbath which he has appointed?


God works. Again I say the contemplation which these words suggest is sublime. When we enter the long and wide hall of the public

factory we are impressed with the number of the whirling machines which the great central engine has set in motion ; but any illustration which the wonders of steam may supply us with falls infinitely short of the vast operations of God. Among the snows of Greenland and the luxuriant productions of the tropics ; in the depths of ocean as well as amid the volcanic caverns of earth ; in the stillness of the desert and among the crowds of cities, God incessantly works. By his Almighty and ubiquitous energy, not only do plants grow and forests wave their branches, but the finny tribes swim, the feathered songsters soar, and man himself lives and thinks, contrives and executes his contrivances. God's great Will sustains the millions of minor wills possessed by his moral creatures, without interfering with their freedom and amenability to his government.

Yet our planet is but a mere corner of creation. It holds a relation to his vast universe somewhat similar to that which a tiny islet holds to our entire globe. Night reveals to us some thousands of those suns and systems which are the outposts of God's magnificent domain. As I write Jupiter has just passed his perihelion, and is specially brilliant in the

autumnal sky, and Saturn too; for this is the period of conjunction of these planets, which may not occur for centuries again. And yet we know nothing of what is done in Jupiter and Saturn. But God works there as incessantly and ubiquitously as in this world. And far far away in Orion and Arcturus and the Pleiades, and all through the uncounted worlds of the Milky Way, and even to the utmost limits of creation, he works—the upholder of all law, the Energy in which all energy operates. I have stood in the private room of a merchant prince whose commercial relations were almost world-wide in extent. It was filled with globes and maps, on which the great man could see at a glance the cities in China, Japan, Australia, California, and the United States, to which his ships sailed, and where his agents resided. Telegraphic wires were led into his office, and he could hold converse with his representatives at far distant ports. And yet how small and mean these transactions seem when compared with our Infinite Father's operations, who works everywhere and ever works everywhere!

We need sleep to refresh us; but our Father neither slumbers nor sleeps. He works by night as well as by day. Our greatest states-



men succumb under their labours, and seek rest in travel by land or sea; and even although health should not fail, a halt is called in Parliamentary work and our legislators are scattered over all the land in their holiday season. But our Father's labours are never intermitted. Evermore he works. I heard Sir Wyville Thomson describe the voyage of the *Challenger* at the meetings of the British Association at Glasgow. He told us how they searched the bottom of the sea, and how they brought up specimens of the lowest forms of marine life—creatures that abounded by the million, and which seemed to be laying the foundations of future continents that might rear their heads above the ocean. And what was this but to describe the unceasing operations of our Father who "worketh hitherto"?

We have in former chapters regarded Christ Jesus as the manifestation of the Father in every successive attribute of the Divine character which has come under our review. We find him also to be an expressive exhibition of the Divine diligence. "My Father worketh," he said, "*and I work.*"

The Lord Jesus was no idler. Diligent he was in Nazareth's workshop, and in the discharge of all the duties connected with that

estate of voluntary subserviency and subjection which he undertook on our behalf. And when he entered upon his public ministry he went about continually doing good. When the labours of the day were over he continued all night in prayer on the mountain side. Not content with labouring in a central town like Capernaum or Jerusalem, he conducted several long itinerancies, both on the western and eastern side of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee, which must have involved great bodily fatigue.


Although he had death before him as the goal of his great enterprise, he worked steadily on, determined not to relax his self-sacrificing toils till the great baptism was accomplished. His last expiring energies he employed in effecting the complete conversion of a penitent sinner who hung at his side. Then he exclaimed with a loud voice, "It is Finished."

But although his work was concluded in one sense, it runs on in another as vigorous and as valuable as ever. The work of atonement for the sins of men was completed; but the work of intercession remains. Yon advocate with the Father can still say, "I work." He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Paul must have had much to do, "on whom

came the care of all the churches." And there are men in the larger denominations of Christians, both in Britain and America, who are over-burdened with ecclesiastical toil. How many letters they have to write, how many preaching engagements to fulfil, how many books to compose, how many journeys to undertake by land and sea! But what are their labours when compared with the incessant work of the Son of God within the veil in behalf of the church! Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, Wesley! ye laboured hard; but how poor your toils look when placed alongside of the toils of Jesus—not merely those which he underwent on earth, but those which now occupy him on high. How many prayers from all parts of the world are constantly being directed towards him! In all the churches on the face of the earth is he interested which have been formed in his name; for he has no sectarian regard for one denomination of Christians more than for another. All who hold him the Divine Head are equally dear in his eye. He has his eye on every mission field from New Guinea to Greenland, and from Gibraltar to the Sea of Kamschatka, and actually *co-operates* with all on every shore who labour to advance his

cause. He constantly fulfils his promise, "*Lo, I am with you alway*, even unto the end of the world." Like the Father, he neither slumbers nor sleeps. He hears the midnight cry of the dying believer, and lists the mariner's drowning prayer. His audience-chamber is not shut at all by day or night. O how he works! What a pattern to all his servants—the ever-working Apostle and High Priest of our profession!

As to this attribute also, like all the others which we have considered, it is true that it is communicable to him who believes the gospel. Nay more, a man cannot really believe the truth as it is in Jesus without being made diligent. Not only is it true that the man who is really renewed in the spirit of his mind becomes merciful as God is merciful, and holy as God is holy, and truthful as God is truthful—he also becometh diligent as God is diligent. The converted man not only gives up cruelty and injustice and lying, but also laziness. He comes to see at the cross the value of precious time. His entire energies are summoned by the stimulus which Calvary supplies into the highest exercise. Whereas formerly he lived languidly, now he lives intensely, exclaiming with President Edwards,



"I am resolved to live with all my might while I do live."

"The hand of the diligent," says Solomon, "maketh rich." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise." Of the virtuous woman the book of Proverbs also says, "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

Dr. Dwight said, "Among all those who, within my knowledge, have appeared to become sincerely penitent and reformed, I recollect only a single lazy man; and this man became industrious from the moment of his apparent and, I doubt not, real conversion." It would look, from this testimony, as if the man who was indifferent as to worldly things was habitually indifferent also to spiritual things, and allowed the golden opportunity of salvation to slip through his hands unimproved. But most certainly when the Spirit of God does take possession of a constitutionally lazy man, in as much as he is a Spirit of activity, the man in whom he dwells forthwith becomes active—"not slothful in business, fervent in

spirit, serving the Lord." Yet let this declaration of an eminent servant of God cause the indolent man to beware lest in the matter of the soul's salvation, as in other things, he should be "too late."

There is one department of diligence in which the "new man" delights to exercise himself—namely, in efforts for the salvation of souls! Formerly he was most remiss in this "walk of usefulness." He did not know the love of Christ; and how then could he be expected to burn with an earnest desire to communicate it to others? He did not know the value of souls; and how could he be expected to work for their salvation? But now he is on fire with love to Christ and love to souls, and, like his Divine Master at Jacob's well, on the lake shore, or amid the city crowd, he works for their salvation.

Sometimes, alas! a sad remissness in this respect steals over professing Christians. They do not "sow beside all waters." They do not "go forth weeping and bearing precious seed." When men "err from the truth," they do not seek to "convert" them and hide multitudes of sins. "O Miss Frances, I should have been yours!" said a dying young lady to Miss Havergal. She meant that the trophy which

had been gained by another should have been a gem in the crown of the young poetess. The latter, however, had been backward about speaking, and the other shy about being spoken to; and thus the exclamation was drawn forth, "O Miss Frances, I should have been yours!" May the Lord impart into us more and more of his own sacred and spiritual diligence, so that as he works, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, we may all diligently labour for the conversion of souls. Let us "work while it is called to-day; for the night cometh when no man can work."

The theological remarks which are deducible from this attribute are the following:—

1. Let it be remembered that the ever and everywhere working Father is a God of love. This has already been proved. It follows, then, that not only must love—that is, intense desire for the welfare of every sentient being, and especially for every moral being throughout the universe, characterise our Heavenly Father, but that he must really be *at work* in every individual case. This remark holds true of the universe, and therefore it must hold true of this world, which is included in that wide word. The poet has said that "Death beats with equal foot at every door;" but we

have here an equally extensive, yet far more cheering, doctrine to declare—the love of the Father knocking at every door—not the stern knock of Death, but the saving knock of Life and Love.

2. We are warranted to make the same remark of the Second Person of the Godhead—the ever blessed Son of God, our Saviour. He ever worketh also, and ever worketh everywhere, universally, that is, throughout that entire creation which has been committed to his care, and specially in this world for which he died, and for which he still pleads. When a Minister of State has passed an important measure, he is deeply interested in its successful out-working and execution. Let us not be surprised, then, when we are reminded that the Redeemer of the world must gaze down on the progress of that darling scheme, the salvation of men through his own incarnation. He gave himself a ransom for all; and must he not be working, and working constantly, for the salvation of all? The Governor-General of Canada or India has no respect of persons. He listens to the cry of the humblest individual of the province. Nor is the ever-working Emmanuel indifferent to the interests of the lowliest of the sons of men.

3. The Divine Spirit, also, is ever working, and everywhere working. There can be no war in the Godhead. If the Father and the Son are thus ever operative, the Holy Spirit cannot be remiss and inoperative. I was informed once of an eminent minister who, when a discussion was going on concerning the influence of the Holy Spirit, objected to the word "influence" as unscriptural, and insisted on the word "energy" as that which is generally used in the New Testament concerning the work of the Divine Agent, as, *e.g.*, "striving according to his *working*, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29). Yes, that blessed energy is world-wide in extent, as well as moral and resistible in its nature, in congruity with the constitution of moral agents. Hence Stephen could say to his impatient hearers, "Ye do always *resist the Holy Ghost*: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Preachers may grow idle and do little, but the Holy Spirit *is never idle*. He is *always at his work*—striving after the conversion and sanctification of souls, even through the light of Nature and Providential dispensation, but chiefly by means of the proclamation of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. This he ever seeks to press home

upon men's hearts by those direct enforcements which we cannot fully explain, but of which we have all had experience. It is said that Napoleon at Waterloo had lost the courage and dash that had marked his earliest campaigns. He did not lead in person; but when he asked an officer who had been in the thick of the fight where the Duke of Wellington was he got a reply that pained him—"Sire, he is always at the head of his squares." Now whoever may hang back and cease to labour in connection with the gospel cause, the blessed Spirit never does so. *He is always at the head of his squares.* The Father works, Jesus works, and the Holy Spirit also works. Glorious Trinity! what a shame to us if we do not also work!

We have now finished the illustrations of the attributes which go to make up the moral character of God in accordance with the programme which we had mapped out when we took up our pen. Are we not entitled at the close to look back over the ground which we have traversed and say, What a God! have we not good cause to be proud of him? Subjects have sometimes been ashamed of the character of their sovereign, children of their

father, and even church-members of their minister; but assuredly we have no cause to be ashamed of our God. He is the source of all the excellence that is in the universe—all Love, all Justice, all Mercy, all Holiness, all Wisdom, all Truth! What a robe of virtues! And mark the band with which the robe is girdled round—all Diligence in the manifestation of the same! We have seen how these attributes are displayed in Creation, in Providence, and especially in the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." We have seen also how our Father expects all these attributes to be manifested by us; for, as has been already noticed, while his Physical Attributes are called by Natural Theologians Incommunicable, his Moral Attributes are styled the Communicable. I recollect that when I was a student of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, the late Prof. Fleming had been lecturing on "Natural Theology," and had quoted the distinction in the Attributes of the Deity just referred to. He had not quoted Scripture; but a raw country student who, if he had not shining ability, was deeply pious, went beyond his preceptor. While reading an essay called

forth by the business of the class he remarked, "It is never said in the Bible by God, Be ye omnipotent, for I am omnipotent; or, Be ye omniscient, for I am omniscient; but it is said, Be ye holy, for I am holy." This quotation produced a powerful impression on his fellow-students; for the word of God is "quick and powerful" everywhere. I have had my eye on that essayist ever since. He is now a useful and respected minister of the gospel. I take advantage of the incident in bringing my little treatise to a close, and beg my readers to imitate habitually all the Communicable Attributes of God; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and every man that hath the hope of heaven in his heart "purifieth himself even as God is pure." In one view of the matter Love, but in another Holiness, includes them all.

THE END.



